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LENA'S PICTURE



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LENA'S PICTURE

A STORY OF LOVE

BY

MRS. RUSSELL BARRINGTON

VOLUME I

What's the best thing in the world?
June-rose, by May-dew impearled;
Sweet south wind, that means no rain;
Truth, not cruel to a friend;
Pleasure, not in haste to end;
Beauty, not self-decked and curled
Till its pride is over plain;
Light, that never makes you wink;
Memory, that gives no pain;
Love, when *so* you've loved again.
What's the best thing in the world?
Something out of it, I think.

MRS. BROWNING.

EDINBURGH
DAVID DOUGLAS

1892

P A R T I

THIS earth, embossed with mountains, laced with streams,
Starred with fair cities, ringed about with towers,
Whose face with hill and laughing valley gleams,
Whose shadowy woods are full of tender flowers,
The birds, the careless beasts beneath the moon,
And that conceited race of feeble man,
All hold their place by harmony, and soon
Sans friendship would sink out of nature's plan.

PIETER COMOLISZON HOOFT.

LENA'S PICTURE

CHAPTER I

Only I discern
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

ROBERT BROWNING.

ON the wall of a little bedroom in a far-off west-country home in Somerset hung the portrait of an old Romanesque church. Who had painted it, how it had come there, no one knew ; and for many years no one had ever had the curiosity to wish to know. Hung up as something to fill the space on the wall above the mantel shelf, it was recognised and dusted only as part of the other furniture of the room, and most of the picture was undoubtedly very dull, not worthy of much attention or acknowledgment as a work of art. The old church was painted carefully and solidly. It was a very correct, laboured, conscientious, and thoroughly inartistic piece

of work—heavy and ‘tight’—oily and black ; but every detail of the old church was depicted, and each paving-stone of the *Platz* from which it was drawn. Some figures less elaborately painted, and switches of green paint meant for trees, decorated the foreground and filled in the lower corners. The figures, however, were so thinly and inadequately put in that the lines of the ground showed through the skirts of the women and through the legs of the men. Evidently the artist was a painter of architecture ; and into the painting of the architecture he had put his conscience.

But, in all probability quite unconsciously, he had put something much better into the rendering of the sky behind the building. All the rules and theories he had been taught, evidently in a German school of art, had not been able entirely to eradicate the power of putting something of the meaning of nature on to his canvas when he worked from his sense of her meaning and not from taught theories ; and at one happy moment he had forgotten the laws of picture-making and had thrown his own native power into the painting of a sky. One evening his eye

must have been caught by the beauty of a luminous light which hung in the horizon after the sun had dipped below it—a light at once clear, transparent, yet mysterious; a light that seemed to hold a secret from a world where the sun had travelled to after he had said good-night to the town and its inhabitants. The painter of architecture had somehow got his pigments to record this clear, transparent, mysterious light, and the little picture got finished in two utterly discordant parts put upon one canvas—24 inches by 20.

The little bedroom where it hung was lived in by Lena Prevost, a young lady who knew nothing about pictures. She did not know that the painting of this sky was in the truest sense an artistic achievement—nor did she consciously recognise that the church was a dull useless piece of work—as far as an artistic result went an utter waste of the many hours that had been spent on its production. A photograph would have given all it gave, and better. Nevertheless from other than artistic reasons the sky had become much to her. She saw in it a hint of the world which was beyond the veil—a world Lena's thoughts and hopes made for as the natural goal of her

everyday life. In painting the picture the artist probably had linked it on to no definite spiritual experience of his own, but he had been able nevertheless to give it a very distinct power of suggesting a comfort to Lena's spirit.

One May afternoon she sat at the open window looking back into her bedroom at the picture. Without being striking, without being beautiful in the sense in which the word beautiful is generally used, her appearance was uncommon. There was a fineness and a finish of make, a simple dignity and grace of movement which would have satisfied the judgment as well as the eye of the most fastidious critic. From beauty we rather expect impressions which inspire astonishment, rapture, excitement; striking and beautiful colour, unusual and splendid form—qualities which come out and insist on our notice and appreciation. Lena had no beauty of that kind. Nothing about her or her appearance came out aggressively demanding attention; but when you looked into it there was much to hold the attention.

Though actually under middle height, her figure, owing to its proportions, left the im-

pression of being rather tall. Her head was small and her waist short, and her simple skirts flowed in long lines, giving sense of height. The colour of her complexion was singularly quiet, pale and even; her hair a fair brown, with no noticeable lights shining on it. Her eyes, cleanly and delicately shaped, were light grey and not large. Each eyelash seemed to have been placed as if nature had spent more than usual time and care on the placing; and altogether, compared to the ordinary human race we see about us, Lena's make was as the statue the sculptor himself has chiselled and finished to the furthest point of finish, compared to the statue left by the workman who is employed to point the marble. The difference is felt but cannot be measured—it results from that inborn sense, enthusiasm for perfection, producing an imperative desire to perfect: the art of arts which creeps into a great artist's touch, leaving on the actual material of the marble a great purity in outline and form—no edge or surface being left smudged or undecided. Likewise nature had been in one of her most perfecting moods when she had invented Lena.

There are faces in pictures you see at

Florence by Philippino Lippi which her face recalled. The evenness of colour shaded so faintly with mother-of-pearl-like tints ; the strongest a pale cool brown, recalled the fair reticence of the early tempera paintings,—her grave, reposed quietness in attitude and movement, a grace also echoing that of the early masters' ideals. But the most obvious characteristic suggested by her appearance was that it was never thought of at all by the person to whom it belonged. Nature had made her singularly simple and straightforward ; but her twenty-one years of life had added reasons for unusual self-control, restraint, and reserve. It was not exactly a sad face, but a very silent face :—there was a depression as well as a strength indicated, strange in the expression of a simple-natured girl, young, and in health.

She was more than usually still that afternoon, so still that not a fold of her soft grey dress moved. There was a sound of voices downstairs, one voice running on quickly and confusedly—weak, yet at times rising rather shrilly into petulance, and another voice, steady and quiet, only saying a word or two now and then. Then came a sound as if a scuffle was

going on ; a door was slammed loudly, and the voices sounded fainter and more distant. The latch of the back door opening into the garden clicked. Then Lena turned, and, looking down, saw the cook running across to the old gardener, who was digging in the kitchen garden. Lena could see into this sideways from her window ; she could not hear what the cook said, but it seemed to strike the old man as important. He stopped his work, struck his spade into the ground, and, holding the handle firmly away from him, hurriedly scraped the clods of earth from his boots on either side of the blade, then, with a swaying hobble, ran to the shed where his coat hung on a nail, and while he was getting into it, made for the little gate dividing the garden from a field, through which a footpath leads you by a short cut to the town. Before he reached the gate the cook called out to him, 'And mind you be as quick as you can.'

Lena conjectured what was going on downstairs ; a look of faint sickening dread passed over her face, weighing the lids half over her eyes, and depressing and saddening the sensitive lines of her mouth. What had happened that day, what was then going on

in the room below, brought into active vividness the old aching pain which had coloured her life ever since she could remember anything. She longed to know more exactly what was happening below, but, as if spell-bound, she sat on again motionless in her chair by the window. Long experience had taught her that her appearance on the scene might make things worse.

Nearly an hour passed when the little garden gate in the kitchen garden was swung open again, and her brother George hurried up the path. She heard him come into the house by the back door, go straight to the drawing-room, and when he had shut the door all seemed quiet. Lena gave a long sigh. She always felt a sense of security when George was in the house, however bad things seemed to be. A few minutes after George's arrival the old nurse Drayton came up the stairs and knocked at Lena's door.

'It's a fine afternoon, Miss Lena ; couldn't you go out for a walk ?'

She was a sturdy, tall, elderly woman, with a not unkindly though mysterious expression in her face—and a watchful eye, alert in seeing, steady and unflinching in controlling.

'Mr. George told me to tell you as how he thought you 'ad better,' she went on.

'Why was Mr. George fetched, Drayton?' Lena asked shortly. Drayton paused a moment, then said :

'Mrs. Prevost isn't very well, and I was thinking as how the doctor had better see her, but I didn't like to send for him without asking Mr. George ; you see I didn't like to upset you about it.'

'But why should I go out?' Lena asked.

'Well, we think we'd better try and get the missus to bed, and it'll be easier, Mr. George thought, if the house is quiet and no one about.'

Lena said nothing, but rose from her chair. She knew that was not all the reason. George would always spare her a scene if he could. She knew that sometimes force had to be added to persuasion—George knew well how she felt it, how faint and sick it made her.

'I am of no use,' she said to herself as she unhooked her cloak from the wardrobe. She went quietly out of the house, not passing the drawing-room windows.

Poor Mrs. Prevost, protesting, jabbering, resisting, was got upstairs at last, and finally

into bed. Then George was able to leave her with Drayton, while he started back to the town to consult with the doctor.

It is but a mile from Islebarton to Bruport if you take the short cut across the fields. George had gone half way, and had turned into the high road when he heard a sound of trotting horses. Then came in sight a high phaeton and a pair of fine bright bays shining in the warm sunset light, advancing quickly along the road towards him. It was a sight suggesting prosperity. Sir Bernard and Lady Lovat, the carriage and the horses, even the groom sitting in the seat behind, all looked the picture of prosperity as they came briskly along facing full the western sunlight.

Sir Bernard was a magnificent Englishman, bright-coloured, splendid ; Lady Lovat was fair and brilliant. They passed George like a flash of bright happiness ; the kindness of Sir Bernard breaking out in a smile of greeting, and Lady Lovat, as she glanced down sweetly and nodded a recognition, looking altogether a smile. Dressed all in white—white feathers fluttering in a white hat ; white dress escaping and floating sail-like back in the breeze, as the carriage passed quickly through the air ; white shawl

held up in soft creamy folds round the warm fairness of her cheek and throat and against the crinkled gold of her shining hair, burnished yet brighter by the rays of the setting sun ; whiter than all, the brilliant flash that glanced out as the smile parted her lips.

They passed, a vision of strength and happiness and sparkling grace. Poor George felt himself and his conditions a sad contrast to those of these favoured people. He paused a moment to look after them. ‘ Why are some people so happy, I wonder ? ’ he said to himself. There was no tinge of envy in the thought —only a puzzled speculative feeling. It was strange there should be such a difference between the lots doled out to human beings.

When we are happy we wonder why there should be sorrow ; when we are unhappy we wonder why there is gladness, we are so apt to tune all nature for the moment to our own key, and when another is forced upon us we feel it strikes like an unreasonable discord, and are inclined to resent it.

George walked on to the town perhaps all the more depressed by his miseries from having, for that moment, felt how strongly in contrast they were to the bright happy

prosperity of his neighbours. His appearance was also a contrast to the Somerset type seen in the faces he met as he went along the road, the cheery animal-like, reposeful countenances, the wide cheeks ripened into brilliant red like the apples of that country by the soft and balmy damp air of the west, belonging to a different race and kind of life from the pale, sallow, long face, large deeply-set orbits, and look of habitual sadness and reserve, which were the striking characteristics of George Prevost's appearance.

The little town of Bruport was formerly fortified on its hill ; but now little remains of the traces of the old walls. Most of the houses forming the town make one long street, running nearly a mile away across a flat moor from the fortifications and the church to the foot of an opposite hill, which George passed over coming into the town from Islebarnton. He had walked down half the street when he met the doctor at his own door, just returned from his afternoon round. When George had described some of the particulars of that day's trouble, Mr. Barrow looked grave, and merely answered he thought he had better go back with George and see Mrs. Prevost. His trap

was there ready, the horse not yet unharnessed, and they could drive back together.

As Lena returned to the house that evening after a long wandering over the fields and hill ridge, the doctor was leaving the house. George met her in the hall, and asked her to go with him into the study. In the twilight they sat down opposite each other. George leaned his elbows on his knees, and pressed his long fingers into his aching eyeballs. After a minute's silence he said, without looking at Lena :

'Barrow fears she will never get better.' Lena did not speak. After another moment's pause George went on :

'The only chance would be for her to go away.'

Then their eyes met, and Lena said in a husky voice :

'Then it is—it is like Gertrude?'

George bent his head slowly by way of assent, and let his face fall again into his hands. But as they had looked into each other's eyes in that half light, out of the feeling that the same aching pain and desponding depression was hurting them both alike, arose a sort of comfort of sympathy : but they could

not speak of either the pain or the comfort; such sorrow as theirs cannot easily be talked about—the mystery of its sadness makes words so inadequate.

When this kind of hopeless sorrow falls to our lot—sorrow which is as the iron entering into the soul, but which no words can convey, and no human sympathy can exactly meet—obvious griefs which openly demand sympathy and which can be spoken of, hardly seem worthy of the name of sorrows.

A few days elapsed—then George and two nurses took Mrs. Prevost to the asylum, and Lena remained at home alone with the servants, too sad to feel any rest in solitude—too pitiful to feel any relief yet from the quiet and calm, so new a sense in the atmosphere of the home.

CHAPTER II

Sorrow is hard to bear,
And doubt is slow to clear ;
Each sufferer says his say,
His scheme of weal and woe :
But God has a few of us
Whom He whispers in the ear :
The rest may reason and welcome ;
'Tis we musicians know.

ROBERT BROWNING.

THE ancestors of the Prevost family were Huguenots. George and Lena's grandfather had been possessed of a property in Essex, and a good income, the results of a successful business made originally by the members of the family who had migrated from France. This grandfather, however, had lost his property and most of his money in reckless speculations, and had died insane. His son married his cousin and migrated to Somerset to work up a business, shares in which were nearly all that was left of his father's estate. He took a long lease of Islebarnton, a small place on Sir Bernard Lovat's estate, a mile

distant from his work at Bruport. His only son, George, was educated with a view to enter this business, and when his father died suddenly, when George was only eighteen years of age, he seemed fully prepared to act as the head of the family. George had never seemed young. He had never plagued his people by any boyish follies, and he was able to take his father's place, both in the business and at home, more as if he were middle-aged than a lad of eighteen, —his mother and his two little sisters treating him with more awe, perhaps, than with affection.

Lena was eight years younger than George, her sister Gertrude four years younger than herself.

From a baby Gertrude had been a strange, violent-tempered child, and as she grew older she often became sulky and moody. She had silent fits, and resented any attempt made to rouse her out of them, becoming sometimes unreasonably exasperated. But when her passion was spent she would come to Lena in a touchingly helpless way, remorseful, yet still, Lena felt, unapproachable. Lena had a nature very tender and affectionate—very sensitive to pleasure and pain. The whole

passion of it seemed to go out in pity for this poor little sister, who was always wrong with herself and with every one else. She longed with all her heart to get in touch with the queer little mind that seemed all awry, so that she might help it to get straighter. There were moments when Gertrude's affection for her seemed strong enough to justify a hope that it might be used as a lever to raise and develop the whole nature; but as soon as Lena would try to work on this, greater violence and unreasonableness would almost invariably follow. With George, Gertrude was rarely naughty, but also never affectionate; he also, though consistently kind and thoughtful in all that concerned her, never outwardly showed her any affection; and as he was away the whole day at his business, it was on Lena the difficulties of Gertrude's peculiarities fell the heaviest.

Poor Mrs. Prevost only made matters worse. She was supposed to be a semi-invalid, with a nervous, hasty, unaccountable temper. She never left the child alone, and yet did none of the real work in trying to take care of her and train her. From very early days George, Lena, and the old nurse Drayton, had a tacit

understanding with each other that it was better to keep Gertrude as much away from Mrs. Prevost as they could, one seeming to excite the other's unreasonableness. Lena's sorest trouble was the feeling that by her mother's treatment Gertrude had lost perhaps the chance of ever being happy and like other children. Lena's judgment was developed early ; she had full use for it, when still but a young child, in trying to keep her mother and Gertrude reasonable, but her strongest affection went out towards the poor little sister, who she instinctively felt wanted mothering, and whose own mother seemed to be able only to increase her difficulties.

Lena was a born musician, and she could never remember the time when she could not play the piano. She would play by the hour to Gertrude. Generally it seemed to keep her quiet and good, but at other times it would excite her. Then no tune was the right one. To leave off was wrong ; to go on was wrong ; and Lena would be at her wit's end to know how to please her or how to quiet her. Every one said she spoilt Gertrude, but she could not help sacrificing herself for the chance of a gleam of that affection which

Gertrude would at times give her. How could she be severe or angry with her?—the poor child put herself so outside everything that was happy and cheerful. Lena herself hardly knew what it was to feel young, the pain of pity had so absorbed her young life.

Gertrude was twelve years old, and hitherto the doctor had treated her naughtiness as a want of health, and hoped she would grow out of it. But at that age her state became more difficult to manage. Mr. Barrow looked grave, said very little, but watched her more closely; and when Mrs. Prevost, as was her wont, ran on with a long string of complaints against her before the child, would try to stop her.

After one of these visits Lena found Gertrude alone, looking very unhappy and morose; she went to the piano and began to play one of Gertrude's favourite tunes. Gertrude stopped her, and told her peremptorily to play another. Lena could not quite make out from her which she meant, but began another. Gertrude, in a violence of passion, rushed at her, seized one of Lena's wrists in both her hands and fastened her teeth in the flesh of her arm. The pain, the

suddenness of the passion, overcame Lena ; she fell off the music-stool in a faint. When she woke up she found herself on a sofa in the little back study, Drayton, her old nurse, sitting beside her, and a bandage round her arm. Gradually the scene with Gertrude came back to her : she felt sick and despondent, and gave a hopeless sigh. Never before had Gertrude hurt her ! 'I'll fetch you a cup of tea, Miss Lena,' Drayton said, as if in answer to the sigh. While she lay alone she became conscious of voices in the next room. Listening with drawn breath she recognised they were her mother's and the doctor's voices. They might be blaming Gertrude. She started up and ran towards the drawing-room. The door was ajar, and before she pushed it open she heard the doctor say :

'I am afraid, Mrs. Prevost, it is not safe for Miss Lena for the child to remain longer at home.'

'You do not know how it happened,' Lena cried passionately, rushing into the room. 'It was my fault, not hers ; I was stupid and did not understand her ; you know it is her health makes her temper difficult : you have always said so, Mr. Barrow, and

mamma complained of her to you, and she knew it was unjust—that she could not help it. She suffers much more than we do from it.'

'Now, my dear young lady, you must really go and lie down or you will be very ill yourself,' the doctor said, trying to calm her, but himself quite aghast at seeing this new aspect of the self-controlled little Miss Lena.

'But you are not to persuade mamma to send Gertrude away; people would not understand her, and might be cruel—very cruel.'

'I promise you nothing shall be done which is not for your sister's good,' the doctor answered appealingly.

Then came a wretched, heart-breaking time for the poor girl. To George she appealed, but George finally agreed with the doctor and Gertrude was sent away. He told Lena gently that what the doctor had feared for some time had become evident. The brain was not sound, and Gertrude must have special treatment. Lena's pain, when she realised this, took the form of feeling that it was a terrible injustice that nature should have afflicted her little sister with such fearfully sad conditions. Her mother put her to torture by referring to Gertrude's naughtiness as if she could help it.

Even Drayton, who was generally helpful and reticent, made remarks which stung her to the quick, as pitying and depreciating instead of sympathising. George was away, having taken Gertrude to the doctor's house, where she was to live for the present. Lena was feverish and ill, and had to keep her bed. When George returned, her only comfort was talking to him about Gertrude. George explained that her state was but another case of the insanity which had been in their family for generations; that they must face it and be brave, and submit and become all the more to one another.

'There is no shame in it,' George said, 'though people seem to think it such a pitiable misfortune. But what we cannot help cannot be real shame. We must bear it bravely, and make no secret of it any more than we should were it any other illness which is inherited in the blood.'

'Oh, but it is so much worse, George,' Lena exclaimed, 'and no one seems to pity it as they ought to.'

'We want no one's pity, Lena, for Gertrude or for ourselves. We must bear our own burden, and live for one another and take

care of mother. We must never, never run the chance of inflicting any one else with our sorrow. We must never marry.'

Lena felt a ray of comfort for the first time since Gertrude's outbreak. If she could give up something for Gertrude, that would make the pain and sense of injustice easier to bear! Things would seem more evenly balanced; the three would seem again to belong to one another. It was the feeling that the poor child was exiled and thrown out from among them that caused the cruellest, bitterest pain to the sensitive pitying nature. To be able to sacrifice something for her, to keep her always in memory by their own actions, that would help them to bear this heavy burden.

Warm June weather came, and Mr. Barrow said Lena might go out. One afternoon, George being still in the town at his business, Lena wandered further than the garden, the limit hitherto of her walks, and crossed the fields towards the village church of High Mallet. She heard the sound of the organ being played by Mr. St. John, the clergyman of their parish.

He was a great friend of her brother's, and had always been very kind to her, especially

in helping her with her music. He too had a great gift for music, and seemed to Lena to play the organ and piano as well as they could be played. He was dearly loved by all his village folk, though thought a strange man by his well-to-do neighbours. Clever they knew he was, and a man with fine literary taste, but except as their clergyman he refused intercourse with his richer neighbours. The Prevost family alone he was intimate with, but even George knew nothing of his history previous to his coming to High Mallet. It was supposed he had a story, some sorrow in his youth, but no one really knew anything on which to found such an idea except that, though still a young man, he had perfectly white hair—that he was never tired of doing kind things to the poor people, and equally consistent in politely snubbing all advances from the rich.

Lena had not heard a note of music since the day she had fainted, and when the sounds of the organ came to her ear through the warm, bright sunlight, she felt inclined at first to turn and run away, but as the sound swelled towards her again it seemed to hold her. She had one of those organisations which music

seems to complete. Without it there seemed always a want to her in the ordinary conditions of life. She passed through the gate very quietly into the churchyard. The door of the church was open, and the full roll of the organ sounds came swelling through and filling the space and air around her. Her nature seemed to enter its natural home. Silently she crept up a side aisle and sat in a corner seat hidden from the organist. He was playing Pergolesi's music ; yearning strains of that Italian church-life so far away in time and place from the present scene in the West of England village ; but the soul of the great master seemed to meet Lena's own innermost soul in those strains. Doubtless they awoke in her a more vivid sensitiveness to her grief, but the effect they produced dignified it. By striking deeply into the inner strata of her feelings, this grand music seemed to allow her sorrow a rightful place and a fitting outlet.

The effect on Lena of her mother's habitual nervous, fussy fretfulness was to make her strangely reserved and self-controlled for a girl of sixteen. Even with George she was dignified and reticent, her desire being to show herself worthy of his great wisdom and kind-

ness in being brave and not giving way. Music was the only companion which seemed to sympathise with the emotional side of her nature. As she listened to the beautiful pathos of the sounds the organ was pouring forth, the tears came into her eyes as in answer to those appealing demands for sympathy which the old Italian master was making to her through his art. He too must have suffered—his heart too must have ached with pity like her own. Coming in through the large west window, golden shafts from the setting sun crossed the aisles and transept of the old church, and shed yet more mystery and glory into the rapturous utterances of the musician, so many, many years ago laid among the dead. The golden haze around her seemed steeped with the sounds of his genius appealing to her own soul, and trying, through its glorious music, to feel with her and help her. So sitting in the worn old oak seat, leaning against the rough, damp-stained stone wall, in the lonely corner of the remote old church, Lena felt a sense of fulness of life, a response to the needs of her nature, no one person, nor any number of people, could have given her.

The music stopped ; the boy who had been

blowing the organ clattered down the church in his noisy nailed boots, and Mr. St. John was shutting it up. Lena felt tear-stained, not fit to be seen, and in any case far too full of that own inner life which had been excited into such emotional vividness for her to wish to come into contact with any living person. She must get out quietly before he saw her. But her cloak caught the corner of a hymn-book as she moved out of her seat, and it fell with a noise to the ground. Mr. St. John stepped back and looked round the pillar which had hidden Lena, and saw her. Greeting her, he asked if she had recovered from her illness.

‘I am quite well, thank you,’ she answered, feeling very confused and miserable, and very conscious of the tear-marks on her face, and wishing she could hide them. She, so pitying and tender-hearted herself, disliked particularly being pitied.

‘I was going to lock the door; do you want to stay longer?’ he asked.

‘Oh no, thank you,’ she said hurriedly, and they walked down the church together.

‘What a beautiful evening!’ he exclaimed. He stopped short, standing in the porch looking out. From its shadow the sky looked

wonderfully full of light and pure liquid colour. They paused ; the evening seemed too beautiful to step out into suddenly.

‘ The sky seems always to mean more when the sun is out of it,’ Mr. St. John said, as if he were speaking to quite a grown-up person.

‘ But it is sadder,’ Lena answered.

‘ Ah, you feel that because you have been so sad,’ he said quietly, without apparently any sympathy in his voice. ‘ I have been very sorry for you.’

‘ We are all sad,’ Lena answered, with a choking feeling in her throat ; ‘ we are all one, and we are separated ; we must be sad.’ The idea which in her own mind Lena resented most was that they could possibly live without Gertrude and yet be happy.

‘ Yes, I know ; George told me.’

Lena knew George talked of things to Mr. St. John which he would not mention to any one else. More as a friend than as a clergyman, George felt he could discuss even religion with Mr. St. John, for he never mounted any stilts, but least of all did he mount stilts about religion. He facilitated confidence by never presupposing any one *ought* to believe this or that. Everything seemed an open question while the

talk was going on ; but where it was a question of morality or conduct, one or two important questions got on to the road of being closed in satisfactorily before the talk was over.

Mr. St. John did not move, and Lena stood by his side in the porch. He was looking away into the sky as if he had forgotten she was there. Presently he said : 'It is difficult to make up one's mind to the fact that many of us have reason to be sad all our lives. And life at your age seems such a long thing, doesn't it ? But it passes very quickly,' he added cheerfully, looking down into her face and speaking as if he were telling her good news ; 'and that is such a comfort when sorrow comes of that kind which must last all one's life.'

Lena looked earnestly into his eyes. What he said was interesting and to the point, she felt. His steely-grey eyes searchingly returned her look, but his voice sounded quite unmoved as he continued : 'But while life goes on the cross must be borne, and it's very heavy sometimes. Your cross is very heavy—I know it is, my poor child.'

'But hers is so much heavier !' Lena protested with passion in her voice. 'We are not to be pitied, it is she.'

‘Your heaviest cross is that you cannot help her—that is what I meant when I said yours was a very heavy one to bear; but I believe,’ he said with energy, again looking up away to the sky, where the light was fading, but where glowing colour was still burning fervidly in the space left brilliant by the downward pathway of the sun,—‘I believe all these sad mysteries will be cleared, and cease when we are once beyond the Veil; she and you will both be comforted. We must have patience; it will not seem long.’

They parted, and Lena, as she walked home across the fields, repeated to herself again and again, ‘Once beyond the Veil—beyond the Veil,’ and when she reached her room she sat down, as it happened, opposite the picture of the old church, and as she once more said to herself the words, ‘Beyond the Veil,’ she became conscious that that painted sky had something in it which seemed also to say ‘Beyond the Veil,’ and seemed to harmonise with and make her more sure of her newfound comfort. The real sky she saw from her window was cut out in light behind the arbutus-tree and the big elms, and the outline of the hill beyond—every line and form asso-

ciated with the sad tragic accent of her life,—as from the earliest days, when she was a very little girl, she used to look out of the window to try and get away from the pain and worries going on in the house. But now she looked on and on into the picture ; and from that evening it became the shrine of a hope that this life would soon be over, and then, beyond the Veil, there would be justice and happiness, and she would be with Gertrude again. She spoke to no one of it. Though Mr. St. John had inspired her new-found comfort, she never referred to it when with him. Instinctively she felt George would not sympathise with her in it, so she said nothing to him. In her thoughts she treated her secret as almost childish, and something to be ashamed of, and yet she felt in her heart it was like a heavenly comfort which eased the weight of sadness where otherwise it would have crushed her utterly.

A year after Gertrude left home she died, and her death bitterly revived the acuteness of Lena's grief. She had implored George to take her to see Gertrude when they heard she was dying, and they went together, but Gertrude seemed hardly to recognise them, and

Lena had to clasp her secret comfort the closer, feeling now more than ever, only in that other life beyond the Veil, could the mystery be unravelled, or any balm found for the sore.

Since the day when his music had unlocked the secret of her sorrow by showing him a tear-stained little face, Mr. St. John had redoubled his efforts to be of use to Lena. He made her play the best music and read the best books, and, though Lena grew up to be a woman in a profoundly secluded and monotonous atmosphere, it was neither uninteresting nor commonplace. Indeed, notwithstanding their mother's fretful, uncertain, sometimes quite unreasonable condition, neither George nor Lena were distinctly unhappy after the first shock of Gertrude's death had been softened by time. It was true, Lena's early youth passed without any distinct joyousness, or unthinking light-heartedness; but thoughtlessness is not distinct happiness even to the young. Her admiration for George gave the every-day life a meaning. It dignified her aims, it saved her from dull triviality. The bond of real affection between the brother and sister, though never shown in any demonstrative way, was more distinctly felt by each

because of the isolation from ordinary society which their trouble involved, Mrs. Prevost being too peculiar for sociability with the neighbours to be possible; and the brother and sister were at all events exempt from that most dreary of all occupations, the caricaturing of companionship, which the seeking of contact for the sake of contact involves—the herding together of people who have nothing in common with each other which so often is given the name of society. With the occupation of social life the Prevost family had nothing to do. Lena had therefore more time for reading and music and for helping the poor of the village. For distinct joy she went to her piano or to church to hear Mr. St. John play the organ.

George took her to London at least once in the year, to hear the best music. The performances in the crowded concert-rooms gave her food for her own study and great delight at moments. But the excitement and crowd would at times painfully recall the nervous overstrained conditions which scenes with Gertrude had formerly reduced her to. Strange vague terrors would seize her; taking sometimes the form of fright at imagining fire breaking out at the opera-house or concert-

room they were in. These morbid conditions were never described or acknowledged to George. Like other emotions, Lena supposed him to be much too grown-up to understand or be able to sympathise with these childish sensations.

So things went on till Lena was twenty-one years of age and George twenty-nine. In the spring of that year arrived the crisis in poor Mrs. Prevost's state which resulted in her having to leave home.

CHAPTER III

There's a woman like a dew-drop,
She's so purer than the purest,
And her noble heart's the noblest,
Yes, and her sure faith the surest,
And her eyes are dark and humid,
Like the depth on depth of lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses
Sunnier than the wild-grape cluster,
Gush in golden-tinted plenty
Down her neck's rose-misted marble :
Then her voice's music :
Call it the well's bubbling,
The bird's warbling.

ROBERT BROWNING.

‘I THINK it's as well that things have come to a crisis at Islebarton, Bernard,’ Constance Lovat said as she and her husband were breakfasting together the day after Mrs. Prevost had been taken to the asylum. ‘It seemed very hard that poor Lena Prevost's life should be spoilt by continual contact with a mind not sane. Besides the pain of it—it must be so frightfully wearing.’

‘Yes, poor girl, and it isolated both brother and sister, and kept them aloof from their

neighbours, which can't be a good thing at their age; now I hope we shall see more of them,' Sir Bernard said cheerfully.

'I don't fancy they will be very get-at-able,' Constance remarked; 'they have got into a way of living without us, and they never seem to me to regret it. And with all their seclusion they have the best thing about here, and plenty of it, and that's Mr. St. John.'

'By the way, Constance,' Sir Bernard said alertly, 'I wish St. John would be more sociable with us.'

'Ah, you may wish it, dear, but you won't get it,' answered Constance. 'We are prosperous, have the good things of this life, and are quite uninteresting to Mr. St. John; the Prevosts live in a small house, and have had sad trouble always going on, and he likes being in it. We have the flesh-pots, and they have Mr. St. John; that's the way things are equalised in this world.'

Sir Bernard answered, smiling: 'Well, I think he ought to try and save the rich from perdition as well as the poor.' He collected his letters, and with these and the newspaper in his hand rose from his chair.

'Yes, and it's we who have to get through

the eye of the needle, isn't it, dear?' Constance said, gathering up her letters too and rising. 'I think, Bernard, it would be a good thing to ask Lena Prevost to come and stay here for a few days. It must be melancholy there alone in the place where all the trouble has gone on.'

'A capital idea, darling—do.'

But Lena Prevost would not accept Lady Lovat's invitation. A sad calm had settled upon the little home at Islebarton since Mrs. Prevost had left it. Lena preferred to remain in this atmosphere of sad calm. She felt no courage, no spirit to join in any other kind of life. Personally she liked Lady Lovat; she felt in her the charm of a sympathy which it was pleasant to accept, but she drew back from mixing in the life at Mallett Court. In a thousand little ways Constance had tried to do something for the Prevosts. It would have been enough for her to know they had trouble for her to wish to be kind, but Constance was personally attracted by Lena, and delighted in her playing. But hitherto she had not been able to get far towards intimacy. Lena was not light-hearted enough to mix naturally in the smart world at Mallett Court. Not that she ever felt shy or frightened of it. Her

simple straightforward dignity of character prevented her feeling awed by the outside signs of grandeur belonging to ways of living which differed from her own, but she felt so really outside the life at Mallett Court; and joining it, without being in it, disturbed her, without giving her any pleasure. George, and all he was to her; Mr. St. John and his companionship—his music and his library; her own piano, and some of the poor whom she was fond of—those were the really pleasant things of life with which she felt it possible to combat the sadness of their trouble. These were all in harmony with the life of which the trouble was part; but that outside world who knew nothing of the peculiar sting of that trouble, who knew nothing of the load of depression with which it stunned all light-heartedness out of life—what had she to do with its pleasures, its sociability, its aims? No, the trouble was hers and George's. It was for them to bear it together alone, with each other, and for each other. Lena had inherited from her French ancestors a definiteness in her make. As in the outward woman every form was clear and distinctly cut, so in the mind, the reason saw clearly and the intentions were purposeful.

Above all other feelings in Lena the strongest was the desire to be faithful to the family life which George and she had in common—to be worthy of the wise George, and to battle with their misfortunes helpfully. Not, perhaps, so much from a conscious sense of duty as from an imperative instinct in her nature came Lena's desire to balance the ugliness in the home life resulting from her mother's and Gertrude's want of mental health, and consequent want of reason and control, by fortitude, self-denial, and dignity. Lena was an artist by nature, and the same fine sense which had made her a real musician had also given her a high standard of taste in living. Consequently, though through this special trouble she had had to endure a special torture, this torture had shown her how to rise above it. Truly distinguished natures not only do not make miseries for themselves when they can avoid it, but never abide in a miserable attitude of mind. The more keenly sorrow is felt, the more imperative becomes the necessity to find a means of alleviating it. Till Mrs. Prevost had been away some days, and the trouble of her departure had subsided, Lena did not realise how much the depression

and restraint which was the habitual atmosphere at Islebarton had been caused by the daily, hourly strain to the nerves it had been, of living continually in close contact with an unsound mind. But after George returned, and life began again for them both minus the constant strain, the relief was great; though from a sense of loyalty to their poor invalid, the feeling was never put into words,—not even into definite thought.

Many days had not elapsed after his return, when George found that his business would oblige him to be away from home for a month or more, and he then urged Lena to accept Lady Lovat's invitation, which had been extended to any time—for any time.

‘I had far rather stay quietly here,’ Lena had said. But George asked Lady Lovat to invite Lena again herself, knowing if any one would succeed in making Lena change her mind, it would be Lady Lovat. So it was that Constance walked up to Islebarton one morning ready equipped with one of her plans. Her personality was one of those which had a great power of its own. The radiance of it half won her battles before she began to speak. She had much confidence—but it was not self-confi-

dence, but confidence in her cause: a confidence that others must all wish the same nice good kind things she was always wishing herself. Sir Bernard liked her best dressed in white, so in white of some description Constance was generally to be seen.

It was a bright morning in June. The outside blinds had reduced the sunshine streaming into the little drawing-room at Islebarton to a warm shaded glow. Lena was playing on her piano when the door opened and a stream of bright sunlight and Constance's white figure walking through it into the room reduced everything around her to shade.

'That is Schumann,' she said, taking Lena's hand. 'Do play it again, it is so beautiful.'

Lena turned round to the keys and played it again.

'You do it to perfection,' Constance said simply and happily ecstatic like a child. 'Thank you a thousand times. That is real pleasure. We none of us get enough music in life. It makes the difference in our days that sunshine makes in a landscape; no dull monotony would be possible if people only had a rightful amount of good music. Don't you think the greatest crime any of us can commit

is being dull when the world is so full of good things ?'

'I think music is quite one of the best, but I know very little of anything else,' Lena answered, and rose from the piano. 'Do you like sitting there, Lady Lovat ? Wouldn't this chair be more comfortable ?'

'I like this—thanks,' and Constance remained sitting on a little low stool. 'Now I want you, Miss Lena, to do us a great favour. Your brother says he must go away for a month or more. I want you to come to us. Now listen. It's all selfishness. We want you at Mallett Court for a few weeks. Sir Bernard's measles have put an end to London for this year, and he has paired with another Member. The doctors say he can't do better than stay quietly here till we go to Bayreuth. We should like it immensely if you would be good enough to come to us. You would give us a tune now and then and make us quite happy ; and then you must come with us to Bayreuth.'

'Oh, Lady Lovat, impossible !' Lena exclaimed, quite bewildered at the mere idea of such a leap into a world so far beyond her own.

'I have an extra ticket, and you must come,'

Constance said decidedly. 'A silly young cousin of mine thought he must go with us. It's the fashion to go to Bayreuth now, you know, so I got a third ticket. Now he thinks he would rather shoot tigers somewhere—I forget where. But fancy wanting to shoot tigers instead of going to Bayreuth! He is welcome to his tigers if you will use the ticket, dear Miss Lena. We can't be away much more than a fortnight, because we are due in Scotland early in August, so you won't be leaving your brother for very long.'

Lena was far too bewildered to argue. The enticement of hearing Wagner at Bayreuth! That was real temptation! And this bright white thing, this creature all sunshine and brilliant fair beauty and kindness, asking her so prettily with a childlike confidence to share her sunshine with her! The voice, the manner, the charm—annihilating all sense of the grandeur of Mallett Court, and its consequent *gène* and inconveniences—it was so human and so true. This atmosphere of sunshine in which Constance seemed to move was also very contagious. Happiness seemed to come off her, and make everything to be done with her so much more worth the doing.

'May I talk it over with George?' was all Lena could think of saying by way of being prudent.

'He wants you to go. He said so yesterday.—So do.'

Before Constance left Islebarton Lena felt almost enough courage to enjoy the idea of a visit to her.

In the afternoon she met Mr. St. John in the field near the church.

'Mr. St. John,' she said without any other greeting, 'Lady Lovat has asked me to go with her to Bayreuth.'

'What a piece of luck!' Mr. St. John answered, and his deep-set steel eyes flashed with pleasure.

'But I don't think I can go.'

'Not go to Bayreuth when you have a chance!' And he stopped walking and faced her.

Lena was silent for a moment, then she asked, 'Why do you not go to Bayreuth?'

He turned, walking on again in his usual attitude, his hands loosely caught together behind him. Then he said, 'That kind of pleasure isn't in my line; it costs too much. But that is no reason why it shouldn't be in

yours. I know all about it, and it is well worth the effort; I have read all Wagner's poetry, and I have the scores of *Parsifal* and the rest. I get quite as much enjoyment as I deserve out of them without spending money going to Bayreuth. But for you it is a thing well worth doing, and you should do it now you have the chance.'

Still Lena demurred; she did not quite know herself. She thought she could never enjoy anything so entirely apart from all her home associations. It seemed like deserting her true conditions, such mixing with and enjoying what would be so entirely outside the lines and troubles of her own belongings—a want of loyalty which would destroy all pleasure. But though her vitality had been lowered it had not been extinguished. Her theories for action and her normal attitude of mind had been formed while the pressure of their trouble had weighed upon her in daily life, and the cause of the strain had been present. The last thing she wished was to cast off her load and not share it with her own,—but nevertheless she could not help the load in a certain degree, casting itself off when the days passed calmly and serenely without urgent

cause at any moment for alertness of tact or restraining self-command.

George, Mr. St. John, and Lady Lovat all arranged that Lena was to go to Mallett Court, and Lena, still protesting, went. Before leaving her room when ready to start she had had one long gaze into her picture. She felt depressed now the moment had come. She felt this effort of kind people to make her happy would be so futile. There, in that sky which hinted of really possible perfect conditions, was her only real comfort ; the comfort which was able to give her more real satisfaction than any amount of so-called pleasures could bestow. That comfort was attainable now ; all the rest must only be waiting—waiting—patient waiting.

In the glorious midsummer weather the life at Mallett Court did not oppress Lena with a sense of being very strange, or uncomfortably new, or indeed differing so very much from her life at Islebarton. Hay-making was going on in the Park and fields. Though there was a park it was not obvious or obtrusive. As in the case of many old Elizabethan places, the grandeur of Mallett Court is made human, and its beauty more rural, by the nearness of the

farmstead to the house, and by the creeping up of the orchards close to the back of the house on the north side, in the centre of which is placed the chief entrance. From the terraced walk on the south side you step down into a formal garden surrounded by old stone balustrades, cornered by arbour tea-houses, and ornamented with many odd and quaint designs wrought in the deep golden ham-stone of the country, now, in its old age, enriched by embroideries in lovely coloured lichens and fine mosses. Shrubberies of flowering bushes and deep-toned yew-trees rise behind the balustrades, the whole guarded by the shadow of monster elm-trees, secluding the garden from the fields and park.

In May-time the shrubberies are as full of colour and blossom as the garden itself. Plumes of shaded lilac blossom are weighed down by their abundance on to the golden stone-work, sprays of bride-like seringa and full balls of white guelder-rose rise fair against the deep yew-tree shade behind them ; close crowded clusters of hawthorn, pink, crimson, and white, in wreaths of sweet-scented loveliness, are tossed high up against the sky, here and there and everywhere. No place could be

found where the special beauties of the '*Wunderschöne Monat Mai*' are more abundant or more beautiful than round the old gardens of Mallett Court.

On the west side of the house stretch out the offices, hidden by foliage of bay, ilex, and arbutus; and from the western frontage of the edifice you descend first by steps, and then by sloping lawns, to the park. The pathway from Islebarton, which makes a short cut to the high road, crosses this piece of park land over the rise of the opposite hill, and is in view from some of the windows of Mallett Court. A little stream too wanders along in the lowest dip of the ground; but only a glisten of quivering light here and there, and the waving of iris blades and soft blooming meadow-sweet, marks its course.

When Lena began her visit to Constance it was June, and the time, the full time for roses was come: and roses by the million Constance would have. Bushes of roses, hedges of roses, festoons of roses—everywhere where roses could be, there they were in crowded delight: blushing pink, fluffy white, soft velvety maroon, bright scarlet carmine, golden and lemon, copper and amber; most

of all, the freshest and pinkest of all sweet lively pinks, the china-rose in thousands on bushes in the grass along the terraced walks round the house, rising in fresh and sprightly vividness against a soft background of the feathered grey green of uncut hay and the dewy azure of vaporous blue distance. Peacocks lingering with stately idleness on the balustrades and terraces of the garden accentuated in splendid force of colour the softened and vaguer tints of distance, flower and field. A very revelry of jewel colour their plumage made in the foreground near the bright pink roses, the enamel-like green of bay leaf, and the rich gold tone of the ham-stone. All these beautiful things seemed to Lena to find their natural centre and climax in Constance, whose white figure, crowned with lustrous ripples of golden hair, looked so fully their rightful queen. And the colour and sunshine of those June days echoed the happiness that radiated from her. This sense of happiness reached even Lena, not in a very positive form, but sufficiently to make life more sunny than she had ever before found it. But still better even than this brightness which the personality of Constance evoked was the consciousness that

every day a feeling of real friendship for her was ripening in Lena's own nature.

A friend can mean so much, and also can mean so little ! We see the idea caricatured every day ; but when it is realised, is there any relationship in life more delightful or more helpful ? No mutual material interests need enter into friendship ; those material interests which so often give rise to the tiresome things of life being accentuated—the scaffoldings of life—which worry the beauty out of so many closer relationships. Imperatively necessary between friends is a sympathy of head and heart, but most of all, perhaps, a sympathy in temperament—that subtle, but all-important ingredient in the creation of a personality. Though outwardly in many ways contrasts, Constance and Lena had some fundamental qualities in common which made them very soon understand and be sure of each other. Not only were both honest in character, but both were notably honest-minded. Both made for truth as far more interesting to them than fiction or any qualities of inventiveness in real life. Both had lived real, full lives—one with the fulness of radiant happiness, the other with the fulness of an ever-present sadness. Both

were intelligently truthful, both were pitifully womanly. Lena was far more interesting to Constance because she awoke in herself the desire to help her bear the burden of her sadness. Constance was more interesting to Lena, because she awoke in her the desire to rejoice with her in her happiness.

The beginning and end of such friendship lies in unselfishness, conscious or unconscious. It was in this case the unconscious habit of mind in Constance keenly to desire to help those she pitied, and whom in consequence she loved. Her strong impulse to make things better for them suggested the means. It was the necessity she felt to do something for Lena in her troubled life which made her plan the conditions out of which their friendship arose. She had made her Fraülein who had brought her up a friend, her father a friend, Sir Bernard a friend, but never before had she made a girl a friend. Never before had she met with one whose nature ran on such large lines as her own, though she did not consciously realise this as the reason. Hitherto she had believed that men suited her better as friends than women, always excepting Fraülein. But Lena seemed better than any man friend, and her friendship

filled a hitherto empty hollow. It was the kind of friendship which women form when they have no sisters, and which in its character is sister-like. The perfect confidence on gentle lines which no man can possibly resent, for it can, in no manner of means, interfere with their own position or interest with the woman they care for. Nevertheless, it is a very real and positive feeling, which has in it perhaps the greatest capability of giving pleasure without the risk of entailing pain, and the greatest power of giving an even sustaining satisfaction to the women who are worthy of enjoying it, of any of the many varieties of human affection.

‘I want to call you Lena without the Miss, and I won’t if you don’t call me Constance.’ This Constance said a week after Lena’s arrival at Mallett Court. They were sitting in the hay-field under a great elm-tree.

‘I don’t quite see that would be in the fitness of things,’ Lena had answered; ‘you are married—I am not; you are a grand lady—I am not. I should like you to call me Lena, but I do not think I should like to call you Constance.’

‘Ah, then, indeed you must do what you

don't like,' and Constance looked eager and round-eyed into Lena's face. 'I can't possibly have a half-sided arrangement.'

'Why not?' asked Lena.

'Because it would be very much outside the fitness of things. It must be on both sides or neither. If you can't feel you care enough for me to go in for that kind of friendship which is below and beyond such trifles as that one is married and the other is single, that one lives in a big house and the other in a small one, I won't go in for any friendship at all. It would only be a waste of time and everything else. We would be acquaintances merely. Would that satisfy you?'

'No, I do not think it would,' said Lena, laughing gently.

'Very well then, you must call me Constance.'

'There seems to me this reason against it,' said Lena, clearing her mind from the vagueness of an instinct to the conclusiveness of a thought. 'You know me pretty well, and I know you, but your friends do not know me, and your society is one I shall never mix with, though I may meet it here. It would sound wrong and forward to the ears of your set

for me to be so familiar, considering I am no relation—not even an old friend.'

'My dear, you have just hit the very nail on the head. Every one has their say about everything in what's called Society, even when two women like ourselves make friends. I know exactly what my feeling is for you. It is very real, and will always be a very real thing to me. If you have a real feeling for me, our calling each other by our Christian names will establish the fact of our mutual friendship.'

'It will establish also an appearance of equality which will be dubbed as presumption on my part,' still protested Lena.

'Now I know you have poor old Lady Massinger in your head. You saw her the other day staring at you and whispering to me. Poor dear soul ; she is always wondering why her grand castle ain't a popular resort. She hasn't a scrap of *fin du siècle* development about her, and she is still at the stage where everybody is put into a class, and exists only for her as a unit of a class. I provoke her because I won't keep inside the drawer where my particular species was kept when her class views were invented. I know she thinks I'm a mistake, because I don't cling exclusively to

the rights of my position, but go a-gadding after the pleasures of other species. And dear old Lord Massinger doesn't think me a mistake —that, of course, makes matters worse. But she's very good-natured really, only she hasn't learnt the last stage of civilisation in society. The best society now is made out of units who grow on their own roots, like the best roses not grafted on to the standard class, and only accepted through belonging to that class.'

'And therefore Lady Massinger would not give me a place, and would resent your giving me one,' said Lena.

'Well, we can't help that, dear. We can't help her resenting what has nothing on earth to do with her, and which she resents because her intelligence won't go along with the times. You are proud, Lena—that's what you are. You don't like a silly old lady to think you are in a wrong place; your dignity won't stand being misunderstood.'

Lena laughed. Constance looked hard at her and burst out suddenly with, 'I wonder how you would look in any other colour but grey, Lena? You always wear grey; I love bright colours.'

'So do I,' said Lena, 'but somehow I do

not feel I have the courage to wear bright colours myself. I like to look at them, but on myself I should not feel dressed in them.'

Constance looked at her ponderingly. 'In pale—*pale* blue—or peach colour you would look so nice. They could not frighten you by too violent a vigour.'

'I think I should always feel happier in grey,' persisted Lena.

'A wilful little lady you are; but I'll give you your grey if you will call me Constance. Now, that's settled, Lady Massinger notwithstanding. Shall I read you some of my favourites?'

They lolled on in the hay, completing their sense of contentment in each other and in the charms and loveliness of sunny June by stray verses of poetry which hardly spoilt the sense of complete idleness. The days passed on, and Constance was even more than usually happy. She had so much more of Sir Bernard all to herself than she ever got in London or in the ordinary course of life. He had had a bad attack of measles in London, and was sent down to convalesce at Mallett Court.

Constance liked to frame her experiences and keep them as pictures hung up in her memory.

These bright June days, smothered in the sense of roses and sunshine ; the air soft and balmy and scented with hay ; this new and gentle friend stepping into her life as something to whom she longed to give some of her own brightness ;—it all made a picture, delicate and dainty, in which her imagination rejoiced.

Lena had been playing to Constance one afternoon upstairs in her own particular sitting-room. There was a hot sun, and they were waiting to go out till after tea. There was a warm glow in the shaded room—a sweet scent of fresh-cut roses and malmaison carnations from great bowlfuls about the room ; and the music had been delicious to Constance. ‘Do you know, Lena,’ she said, lolling back in her big arm-chair and stretching her arms up above her head, ‘it sometimes frightens me to think how happy I am. It is not only that I have very nearly everything that any woman can want, but I have such a power of feeling happy. Things give me such delight ! Even the saddest things one sees among the poor and sick, though they make one’s heart bleed at the time, they don’t ever really permanently sober my capacity for delight : I enjoy everything so much !’

‘Are you as happy in ugly London as here? You do not look as if smoke and soot could ever be the right things for you to live in, nor yet the crowds and the rush of society.’

‘Yes,’ answered Constance, nodding her head and looking straight in front of her, ‘yes, even the things in London make me happy.’ Then, rousing herself, added with more energy, ‘Of course I have always Bernard with me to make every place and everything enjoyable. But other things, outside that, give me much more pleasure, I fancy, than they do most people.’

‘The happiness is in yourself, your own kind, generous self to begin with, and the compound interest which has rolled up out of the many generous kindnesses you have done all your life, since you were a baby,’ Lena said, looking at Constance lovingly.

‘Very nice and flattering, dear; but I don’t think giving away what I didn’t want myself—for I have always had more than enough and to spare—explains the matter. I suppose it is health and temperament. I tell you I get frightened. I shall have to pay for it some day, I know.’

‘What do you enjoy so much in London?’ asked Lena.

‘Well, *London*—only what *London* gives. People often rail against *London* and *London society*, but I don’t. Of course, there is a great deal that’s ugly—based on the very ugliest of human passions, “envy, malice, and all uncharitableness”—but in reality it’s very easy to skim over that and have nothing to do with it, and enjoy the really good things in *London*. Besides the well-established good things—the music, the pictures, the theatres—there is the talk. The talk is so good in *London*, where people get all well shaken up till the brightest wits rise uppermost and hold their own. People find their real right level in the best society in *London*, and the plums of society are pretty fairly dealt out.’

‘And you get the advantage of them in consequence,’ said Lena.

‘Yes, I’ve been very fortunate; because, you see, everybody likes Papsy and Bernard, and believes in them. Though neither of them are very big in any special thing, all the very big men like them, and so they talk to me, and I like them immensely.’

‘And they like you immensely,’ added Lena.

‘They are very kind to me; I think we do get on pretty well. To begin with, the really

big men are always clever enough to know how to make themselves agreeable to women.'

'And you are always clever enough to know how to treat the species,' Lena said, with a laugh in her eyes.

'I hope so,' Constance replied. 'It isn't so very difficult. They don't talk very tall, but they manage to give a flavour to the common-places which is very inspiring, and makes one talk well one's-self. It's so easy for them to skim lightly and gracefully the surface of subjects and produce an effect when they have all the weight and tradition of their achievements to back them. And they take trouble; that's the real secret. They feel they have a reputation to keep up. Just as a great beauty has always to be well dressed, so a great man feels he must justify his reputation even in talking to us silly women. He must make a suitable impression; that's to say, the big all-round man, who knows his *métier* in society as well as his speciality. Of course, there are bears who have done wonderful tricks, whom the world lionises for a time, but they soon fall out of it.'

'And you enjoy this contact with great people very much, Constance?'

'Yes I do,' she answered, 'very, *very* much.'

The sense of big people and big subjects gives a nice flavour to life, and is really the secret of the best society. I like the big men, and I like the beautiful women, and the beautiful clothes, and the beautiful jewels. Oh how I love stones, Lena—sapphires deeply blue like the sky of a summer night, diamonds with their liquid, dew-like sparkle, or like the light in a child's eye, and emeralds more beautifully green than the greenest lawn! Each stone in its own little self seems to concentrate a whole world of colour. And on beautiful women they are doubly precious. I like the grandeur without strain, and the splendour without self-consciousness, you get in the biggest world. I like it all, I enjoy it all !'

Constance paused, her face beaming with brightness as she recalled these good things of her London life.

Then Lena said, ' Why do you like me, Constance ? '

' Why do I like you ? Oh, that's quite another matter. I fancy I enjoy all this London world and the great country places so much because I don't expect or want them to give me what is not in their nature or power to give. People wreck themselves in society generally because

they look to gratify a deeper kind of interest than it is possible for any society to satisfy. Unless very specially gifted, the people with big positions can't be expected to go deep. They have to know a little about so many things ; they have to be up to the mark in so many ways. If the material side of life was not made very easy they could not get through it all even in a shallow way. That's where the Socialists seem to me to be so very unfair. I have not anything very tremendous to keep up. Bernard isn't a Prime Minister, or an ambassador, or a big peer—still I have the enjoyment of much of the splendour of life, and I have my life full down to the very deepest depth because I have Bernard. But the poor women who haven't Bernards—only mock sort of husbands—they are the people who find society hollow and unsatisfying. I never am in a position to want more than the passing interest and enjoyment of the hour, and the society I am lucky enough to get supplies that amply. But in you I have demanded much more, and I hope I have got it—some one to keep me from getting horribly selfish—some one to talk to and love like a sister, and take care of and help like a child.'

Her voice grew a little unsteady ; she cleared it before going on : ' You see, Lena, we have not got any children, and I fancy no woman can be perfectly satisfied who has no exercise for her instinct for mothering something or somebody. If she has no human being to mother, she must have a dog or a bird. I quite enjoyed Bernard's measles because it was infectious, and I insisted on nursing him entirely alone. Generally men hate their health being even mentioned, and won't be taken care of in that way ; and society could never fill up that want in any degree. But friends might ; at least a friend whom one could do something for—*might*.' And Constance looked wistfully into Lena's face. ' I think you might do that for me ; and also, if you would let me share your trouble with you as far as I could, and, as it were, make it partly my own, I should feel less frightened at being so awfully prosperous ! Besides, I have become an epicure in happiness ; I have had so much I have become *exigeante*.' The bright smile rippled again over her face as she turned it up to Lena, who was standing behind her leaning on the back of her chair.

Lena's face looked very quiet, but a glisten

in her eye and a quivering about her lips showed she was touched. She bent down over Constance and kissed her forehead, and said very gently, 'I will try—you are so sweet and dear in wanting to help—I will do all I can and try and be helped. But ours is strange sorrow.' She raised her head, looking away in front of her. Then fervently, almost with passion, she went on speaking: 'It seems to hold you in a vice. There is no turning to right or left to get out of its way. It is crushing till you have learnt the habit of enduring and living in the hope of the future time when everything here will have come to an end.'

Constance clasped the two hands she had taken as Lena had leaned over her tightly to her, and looked up earnestly into Lena's face, her own quivering with sympathy. 'You are much further up the ladder of experience than I am, Lena,' she said. 'It seems to me happiness fills up the gaps and inlets into much that belongs to the living of life. It keeps one so raw and untempered compared to those who have suffered.'

'It has taught you a power of giving and healing which is a great blessing to possess.' And Lena as she spoke looked away; the

glisten had ripened into a tear and was rolling down her cheek.

‘Oh, you must not think I am not immensely grateful for all my happiness. Positive happiness, like great beauty, is a grace past description in words. It rises to a higher region—to the emotional—the nature in us with which ordinary words have nothing to do. It is a beautiful gift. I tell you it makes me almost frightened to possess it to the extent I do.’

‘You are the right person to possess it to any extent, for you are always trying to share and spread it to every one about you.’

‘Of course, one must be a fiend of selfishness if happiness does not teach you generosity. Those people who have attained to their heart’s desire, and are in the full enjoyment thereof, and yet can rest without trying to heal the wounds about them and give to others of their content, must indeed be monstrosities of bluntness and stupidity—if not of cruelty. But, even if they do the best they can with their happiness, the fact remains, they have got it—and all the more if they share it generously; and they have *not* the chastening rod which gives a finish of grace to the natures who suffer, and suffer nobly, which is quite

heroic. I don't envy you that grace a bit, dear, for I love my happiness very much, and I love you and I love to admire you. I only mean it makes me feel small. I am quite content to feel small if you will only realise that you can help me more than I can help you, and get rid of that idea that there is any gratitude due to me. We are not even quits. The advantage is so much more on my side.'

'I think I am beginning to care for you so much I don't feel very grateful,' Lena said. 'As to my being able to give you anything else but affection, we had better drop that idea, I think, as little short of nonsense.'

CHAPTER IV

AS the days went on, Lena felt more and more the charm in Constance which came off her on to every one and everything around her, being one of those bright, finely finished natures from whom happiness emanates. And everything she had known in life had come to her in a happy form. Excepting the fact that her mother died when she was born, every circumstance of her life seemed almost too fortunate to be natural. She had inherited much of her mother's beauty, though Constance had not the same distinct celebrity as a London beauty that Mrs. Tregere had enjoyed. She was on a smaller scale, and even when still a child there were signs of intellectual sensitiveness in her countenance which, though making a face interesting, mars rather than enhances the popular element of its beauty. Mrs. Tregere was a beautiful, lovable woman, possessing great charm of

character but no specially intellectual gifts. Her father had been an archbishop, and Constance was supposed to have inherited from him a gift of monologuing. Mr. Tregeré would make Constance give him what he called 'a grandpapa's sermon' from the time she was a tiny child, which meant generally an account of what she had been doing in picturesque language. She had always had enough humour to make these sermons very amusing ; and when she grew up it would have been difficult to say which was the most attractive of her special charms—her talk, her golden waves of sunny hair, or her bright, speaking smile breaking out into such joyous, spontaneous ripples of laughter. From a baby she was her father's joy. He could imagine no better company than Constance. All his love for his beautiful wife—all his grief at her death—all seemed to turn to devotion for the little daughter. Had it been possible to spoil such a nature as Constance possessed, spoilt she undoubtedly must have been ; and, indeed, had it not been for 'Fräulein,' Constance might have been the worse for the intense devotion and attention her father bestowed on her. Fräulein was a great institution in

the house. She had been governess to Mrs. Tregere in the archbishop's family, and on her death was installed as controller-general of Mr. Tregere's household and controller in particular of the little daughter. She also became devoted to Constance, and her devotion incited her to use the utmost judgment in bringing her up wisely. Under her influence all the happiness which Constance enjoyed was encouraged, but directed into unselfish grooves. There was a great amount of strength and sincerity in the large German lady—a kind of moral bracing which prevented all the good things of life which fell to the lot of Constance from becoming pernicious to her character. Naturally generous and sympathetic, Constance had her usual luck in getting the best possible training for remaining unselfish.

Mr. Tregere had begun life in the Foreign Office. When still quite young he passed into diplomacy, and when still under thirty his uncle left him a large estate in Cornwall. He then left the service and became member for a Cornish constituency, married and settled down to a life at home. In the House of Commons he soon acquired a very enviable position from his special gifts of character

quite as much as from his intellect, and perhaps chiefly owing to the fact that no one did envy him. He put no passion into politics—he was essentially not a party man ; but he had sincere and individual feeling about important subjects, and both sides of the House would consult him and value his judgment. The soundness of his views was appreciated, based as they were on principle rather than party grounds ; and when he spoke, which was not very often, and though he was no great orator, his speeches had more weight in bringing a subject to a conclusion than many speeches from members who were. In society and among his friends he enjoyed the same kind of pleasant position, so that his little daughter grew up never seeing the ugly side of society, only the friendly, happy side. It was Mr. Tregere's nature never to say or do anything that was not considerate and kind, either of the absent or to the present, and people almost unconsciously tried to be their best in his company ; so that the home life in which Constance grew up was singularly refined—a refinement due to what might be called tact of the heart, not simply the tact of good breeding, which may be but as veneer, put on

chiefly for the selfish benefit of the possessor, but the sensitiveness for others which starts from the very core of a kind and considerate nature. Though rich, and living as rich people do in London, the luxury Mr. Tregere indulged in was sensible in its kind, and not proud of itself. In the more important elements of life, also, there was an innate modesty in the enjoyment of very special gifts which made him a very delightful person, and added a grace which enticed admiration rather than envy. All this seemed to descend to Constance. The world felt very kindly towards her; and even when, only twenty, she met Sir Bernard Lovat, and they both fell desperately in love with one another, the London matrons resigned him to her with less discontent than they would have felt had he married any other London beauty.

Constance had not exactly the reputation of being a beauty. Like all the other good possessions which the father and daughter enjoyed, the reality of her beauty was greater than its prominence. It shined out of her; grace and brilliancy emanated from the whole nature—soul, mind, and body; but she did not pose or get up as a beauty, and

unless they were unusually knowing, the society papers rarely mentioned her among the notables. And her career as a girl was short, for when twenty she married Sir Bernard Lovat. Her father was very good. He gave her up without showing how much he felt it, and was rewarded by Sir Bernard begging him to let them share the house in Berkeley Square with him when they were in London. But three years after their marriage Mr. Tregere had an illness, and the doctors advised a warm climate. A colony enjoying a perfect climate, but requiring tact and discretion in its Governor, wanted a new Governor, and Mr. Tregere accepted the Governorship for the sake of the climate. So it was that when Constance made friends with Lena her father had been abroad two years. ‘Fräulein’ also had disappeared in order to look after relations in Germany; so there was more room in Constance’s daily life for a friend than there had been during her previous married life.

Sir Bernard’s ancestors had lived for centuries at the beautiful old Elizabethan home in Somerset. In the family character and in the family circumstances there had been

singularly few changes for generations. The Lovats had experienced no grave misfortunes affecting their prosperity; neither had they ever come to the front in any startling prominence. Still, their position had always been, and was, one of the most secure and most respected among the many secure and respected magnates in the West; and their special constituency sent them to Parliament as an inevitable sequence to the fact that there was one ready to send. The Lovats were always to be depended on. They were ever loyal to a cause and to a friend; they never took up new-fangled notions; they were never frivolous or erratic so as to startle or upset the equilibrium of the slow-moving West of England mind. They possessed noble characters, sound working minds, but no specially brilliant gifts except beauty. It was a splendid-looking race—from the days of the first Lovat of Mallett Court, whose full-length portrait hung in the gallery in puffed and gaudy garments, bows of lace and pearls on shoes, painted in Queen Elizabeth's day, to the present magnificent Sir Bernard in the soberer, less quaint, but equally hideous garb of the present gentleman. Constance wor-

shipped with delight the loyal nature allied to such beauty in her husband ; her intellect as well as her heart recognised how supremely high in the scale of human qualities were such gifts of nobility of character and right-mindedness possessed by her lord. Sir Bernard worshipped everything in Constance that made her Constance—her beauty, her grace, her mind, her strong individuality, and her courage in showing this individuality. In daily life he felt the stimulating quality of her nature as so much mental and moral champagne. She was so brilliant, so spontaneous, so original ; yet so sound, so good, so tender and pitiful, the whole being sent forth a sunshine which eliminated dulness from the vocabulary of life for him. Well might poor George Prevost ask, ‘Why are some people so happy?’

But before Lena had started with these happy people to Bayreuth, she began to feel that there can be great benefit in happiness—real happiness, which means happiness allied to unselfish generosity. It is contagious, and in its atmosphere the miserable feel their load lightened.

P A R T I I

Even so, when first I saw you, seemed it, love,
That among souls allied to mine was yet
One nearer kindred than life hinted of.
O born with me somewhere that men forget,
And though in years of sight and sound unmet,
Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough.

D. G. ROSSETTI.

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be as soon as kindled, cool'd ?
Who renders vain their deep desire ?—
A God, a God their severance ruled ;
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea !

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

CHAPTER V

THE first day's journey brought the party late in the evening to Cologne, and it was late on the following morning before Constance and Lena were ready to join Sir Bernard and begin sight-seeing. They sauntered first into the Cathedral close by. Everything she saw came to Lena as new and interesting, whereas to the Lovats everything was known and had been well digested on former visits.

‘I think, Bernard, there is something very fine about it,’ Constance said, as they stood inside the Cathedral near the west door and looked up into the immense height. ‘It’s the fashion with the particulars to cry it down, but I think the idea of it is quite ethereal and very suggestive. It springs up with such a desire to reach to the sky. It looks as if it had done it quickly, spontaneously, with one spiritual impulse.’

'I think it is wonderful,' Lena exclaimed. 'Everything looks big abroad, but this is enormous!'

'Yes, very enormous compared with High Mallett,' Constance answered, still looking up. 'Do you know, Bernard, it reminds me of that new thing you put in the shrubbery last year—that thing that grew so very, very tall with an insignificant little flower at the top.'

'The *Sonchus palustris*,' replied Sir Bernard.

'Yes, that's it,' Constance said as they walked up the church. 'All these Gothic celebrities remind one of something in vegetation.'

After wandering over the Cathedral, Sir Bernard taking great pains to show Lena everything of interest, they drove about the town and visited various other churches. Still, much remained to be seen, and Lena felt ever eager to see; but the day was hot, and letters had to be written; so, though it had been settled to dine quite late, they returned to the hotel some hours before dinner-time. Lena had soon written her one letter to George, and, as the afternoon light grew warm towards evening, she longed to be out again. She whispered this to Constance, who was still writing.

'I suppose you had better take Naylor.'

'I had far rather go alone,' pleaded Lena;
'I won't lose myself.'

'All right, dear,' Constance answered in a hushed tone, looking towards a further table where Sir Bernard was engrossed in writing his letters. She understood well what much better company Lena would be to herself without Naylor, the maid; but she knew Sir Bernard would have thought it wanting in courtesy to have allowed her to go alone.

Keenly enjoying the sense of novelty and freedom, Lena wandered away over the uneven pavements, across the wide Dom Platz—looking, as she passed, again admiringly up at the great mass of cathedral building—through the shadowed narrow streets till she found herself by the river,—that great, quickly flowing Rhine of history and legend she actually saw before her!

Foreign lands and foreign ways have all a special glamour for those whose lives have been starved for new incident and impressions; and with Lena they met and satisfied the craving that was beginning to grow in her to live out of herself and her depressed conditions, and get away from them into a healthier, more cheerful atmosphere. This

new sense of imbibing and growing came to her more fully as she rambled about alone than it would have had she been obliged to listen to any information about the things she saw, or had any guide, written or spoken, been with her to add knowledge to the delight of seeing. Each old house or wall she passed, the one or two old churches she peeped into, everything her eye caught which was strange and interesting, told its story to her eye the better for her mind not having to learn a lesson over it at the same time. She would ask her way as soon as it was time to go back, but till then she need have no idea where she was, or how far she had wandered.

All sunshine had disappeared from the narrow streets, and she was about to look at her watch when she found herself emerging into brighter light again. She had come out on to a large platz, the centre of which was filled with lines of trees. She walked down the outside avenue towards the end, where she could see through the branches a large building. Looking up as she walked, she was astonished to see the heads of two huge wooden horses looking out of an upper window! What could possibly be the story

of such gigantic toys? Then on she went till the line of trees stopped, and fronting her was a church.

But surely she knew it! Standing suddenly still, she cleared her eyes, then moved on further into the space in front of it. The sun had set behind the church, leaving it in clear, sharp outline against a sky vibrating in light and golden warmth. Lena felt dazed; this was not new to her, but for a moment she could not seize the link, at the same time feeling a conscious recognition of something familiar. Then, almost aloud, she exclaimed:

‘It is my church!’ Unspoken came the thought, ‘Beyond the Veil.’

Yes, there it was, line for line, detail for detail, the original of that picture in the little bedroom at Islebarton. And, marvel of marvels! there was the sky too. That seemed to Lena little short of a miracle: that she should see the original of her picture in reality for the first time against that sky with that light behind it which for so many years had meant so much to her. Calm, gentle Lena could at times be moved and agitated in a way more lively and easily excited natures could not have followed or understood. Had it been

possible she would have fallen on her knees and covered her face with her hands, so great was the feeling of awe with which this coincidence inspired her. It was as if a miracle had been worked in her presence. But as such action was not possible on a public platz, she stood quite immovable, her eyes gazing upward with a look of awe and wonder, her mind only conscious of the thoughts and feelings which that outline and the sky beyond recalled and seemed to vivify, as her picture presented itself a solid reality before her eyes.

As the brightness in the sky began to wane, the thought that she must be returning to the hotel brought her back into the present. Then she became conscious that some one was standing near her. Waking herself quickly from her trance of wonderment, she turned suddenly, and met, fully looking into her eyes, the gaze of a man standing near her. His intent look also had something of trance-like wonderment in it. For a second he seemed unable to unfix his riveted gaze; but then, growing very red, he raised his hat and bowed apologetically. The movement was instinctive to excuse himself for having

so undeniably stared at Lena. But it just broke the ice sufficiently for her to ask him quite naturally and simply—

‘Could you tell me the name of that church?’

‘That is the Apostle Kirche,’ he replied with a grave courtesy, and, raising his hat again, turned and walked away.

He spoke the few words in English well, but evidently he was not an Englishman. He was tall, wore a loose cloak, and carried a sketch-book in his hand. When he took off his hat, a rather wild head of long, wavy hair showed itself.

Gustave Allbretcht—that was his name—had been loitering down the platz under the trees, when his eye caught sight of Lena's figure, motionless, as if transfixed. The immobility struck him with curiosity; the graceful outline of the figure with admiration. Could she be so intensely absorbed in the beauty of the old Romanesque church? If so, she must surely be an artist like himself. As he came within a few yards of her and in sight of the upturned profile, the eye dilated as with some inner, deep-felt excitement, the lips apart as from some sudden astonishment, he stopped short, and stood also quite motionless gazing on this, to him, strangely interesting face and form.

In Germany are to be seen sometimes strikingly beautiful women, of such very uncommon beauty that they at once suggest to the mind heroines of archaic romance ; but it is rare in Germany to see a woman who, like Lena Prevost, could not be called a beauty, but in whom, nevertheless, graceful proportion and pure distinction of outline, altogether fineness of make, produces a charm quite as full of poetical suggestion as great beauty itself can be. To this artist stranger her special type of face and figure recalled a religious type. The traditional Madonna of the German is of a very different type from the one descended to us from Raphael, and is more like the earlier Italian ideal. Lena suggested something very much like such an ideal to Gustave Allbretcht, as he gazed at the clear-cut, pure lines of the face, the fine evenness in the faint colour and texture of her complexion, the delicacy, daintiness, and finish of every detail of her appearance and dress—all this without a hint of womanly vanity or triviality. It gave him unmitigated surprise and satisfaction to have found anything in real life so like his ideal. Only was it when she suddenly turned and their eyes

met that he realised how unfitly public was such a place in which to show his undisguised admiration. But once awake to this fact, being of a nervous and self-conscious make, he hurried away down a side street, feeling unnecessarily covered with shame and confusion.

Lena, suddenly remembering it was getting late, looked at her watch, and found she had but a quarter of an hour to get back to the hotel before dinner-time. She felt dazed and excited. She could not recognise any of the streets within sight, but saw a little open carriage waiting to be hired, and, stepping into it, was quickly rattled over the noisy street pavements back to the hotel.

‘Constance, do come into my room,’ she said as the two met in the passage. ‘Such a strange, a wonderful thing has happened! At least, it seems wonderful to me.’ And she began hastily taking off her hat and cloak. ‘That picture in my room at home, that church with the sky behind it—it is here. I saw it to-night, and with the sky behind it just as it is in the picture! ’

Constance looked surprised, but more so, evidently, at Lena’s excitement than at the incident.

‘Oh, dear Constance, it may not seem extraordinary to you: it is like a miracle to me !’

Constance had not seen the picture at Islebarton, so she felt outside Lena’s astonishment. Lena’s habit of reserve, also the sacred feeling she had embodied in the picture, had prevented her talking about it even to Constance. She had connected it with those feelings which she had always felt shy of with George, and so it had got put away in her most sacredly innermost self. But all barriers seemed broken down after the miracle of that evening, with Constance at least.

‘I must have looked extraordinary,’ she went on as she hurried on her dressing; ‘for a man—a gentleman—was watching me as if I was doing something out of the way. And he told me the name of my church. It is the Apostle Kirche.’

‘The beginning of a romance !’ exclaimed Constance, now quite in it. ‘But, Lena dear, this won’t do ! I can’t let you go out alone if you let gentlemen talk to you.’

Lena laughed. Having hastily finished the arrangement of her simple dress, she said, ‘I am ready. I must tell you all about it

some day, Constance. You do not know what it all means to me !'

As the Lovats and Lena were walking down the dining-room to the end of the table where their dinner was to be served, Sir Bernard, looking across to the other side of the room, exclaimed, 'Why, Brampton, you here !' and went up to two men who were settling to their dinner at another table.

'That's very nice,' Constance said, and, turning to Lena, explained, 'That's an old Oxford friend of Bernard's—Lord Brampton.'

'Oh, Constance, and that is the person who told me the name of the church ! How curious !'

Lord Brampton was saying, beginning to cross the room, 'And there is Lady Lovat.'

'Shockheaded Peter,' whispered Constance to Lena, looking towards Lord Brampton's companion. Lena looked up inquiringly. 'Don't you know your Schtrümfel Peter ?' Constance answered. 'How do you do ?' shaking hands with Lord Brampton. 'Are you going on to Bayreuth ?'

'I wish I were,' he answered ; 'I couldn't get a ticket—put it off too long—I didn't know there would be such a run on them.'

My friend there, Mr. Allbretcht, is going on from Rothenburg, where I am going to sketch for a few weeks.'

Sir Bernard, lowering his voice, asked, 'Who did you say he was ?'

'Gustave Allbretcht—an artist, my greatest friend. Such a good fellow. Known him ever since we were boys. His father is a great Lutheran preacher and an ally of my governor's. May I introduce him to you ?'

'Do,' said Constance ; 'and can't we manage to sit together while we feed ?'

'Delightful. Kelner, just move those two places over there to this table, please. Here, Gus, my dear fellow, do you mind coming over here ? I have found my old friends, Sir Bernard and Lady Lovat.'

There was a bowing all round. Allbretcht had recognised Lena at once. His shyness came full upon him as he remembered how she had discovered him so rudely staring at her. She could not tell how, in the eager enrapt gaze, her parted lips thinned by excitement, he thought he had read the true artist enthusiasm for something really fine and good in architecture. Nor was she assuredly the kind of woman to be pleased

with admiration of her appearance, shown in such an ill-bred manner on a public place. He also little guessed how, in seeing him at that moment, when her whole nature was still vibrating with surprise and excitement at having the deepest, most serious interest of her life recalled so suddenly and unexpectedly, he had become connected strangely with the scene which had created her emotion. Moreover, though unconsciously, in that sudden surprised look into each other's eyes, something in each had spoken to the other which made a second meeting too interesting to be quite comfortable in the commonplace conditions of a table-d'hôte room. So, when Allbretcht crossed the room at Lord Brampton's bidding, when he bowed to Lena he looked intentionally away, so as not to claim any recognition. But Constance, turning round, formally introduced her to Lord Brampton and Mr. Allbretcht ; and Lena said in her usual simple manner, still engrossed in her strange experience, ' You were kind enough to tell me the name of the Apostle Church this evening.'

With a bow of stilted courtesy, and a distant reserve of manner, his shyness making

it painful for him to utter, he said, 'You are interested, I perceive, in early Romanesque architecture ?'

'No, I'm afraid I do not know anything about architecture; but I have a picture at home of that church, and I never knew its name before, nor where it was.'

Then in sitting down to dinner they got separated. Gustave Allbretcht felt irritated with himself. Her quiet self-possession and simple ease made him feel like a fool. When afflicted with a fit of shyness, which in him was a constitutional misery he was for ever battling with and never succeeded in conquering, he always did feel like a fool and much irritated with himself; but in this case he felt also irritated with Lena. He thought, 'After all, that face meant nothing! Only the most ordinary young lady's interest in finding the original of a sketch she possesses and learning its name! Nothing but a most commonplace tourist's desire to acquire information! And I thought it meant enthusiasm for art and distinction in taste—all the unutterables! *I am a fool!*' And with a kind of lurch he threw himself into his seat.

CHAPTER VI

IN appearance Lord Brampton was slight and fair, of small, rather than short, proportion. Though refined and delicate in make, he was not weakly, nor did the outer man indicate any lack of character in the inner. But his hands were singularly white and transparent, quite feminine in delicacy, and the movement of the fingers was characteristic of a fineness and a fastidiousness which ran through the whole nature. Though essentially an Englishman, moreover a manly Englishman, he was not a man of sport. He shot no birds, he hunted no foxes, he took no interest whatever in a racecourse. He had never played cricket since he left Eton, and while there as seldom as the powers that were permitted him to abstain. As to lawn tennis and golf, he knew not the A B C of either game; and yet the fibre of his mind and character was as manly as that of any

athlete or sportsman. He had an unusual individuality, and possessed essentially the courage of that individuality. The endurance and tenacity of his class evinced themselves in the assertion of this individuality—in carrying out persistently his own line in life, which was an exceptional line for a man in his position to take. His friends had to accept Lord Brampton and what most of them considered his *fads* as inseparable. Humorous and quaint in conversation when he chose to exert himself, as a rule he thought it hardly worth while to say much. His position as eldest son of an earl had had little influence in forming his tastes or guiding his pursuits. His real self had, since he was a boy, been absorbed by a passion for painting and by his friendship for Gustave Allbretcht.

Gustave Allbretcht was tall, slim, and loosely made, somewhat queer and somewhat graceful to look at, without a doubt distinguished-looking. His blue-grey eye saw with quick sight everything it rested on. From a prominent observant brow the nose wandered down in a rather irregular, though by no means indistinct, form. In the whole make of the face, though there was irregularity

according to the canons Greek art has established as to the right form a human face should be moulded in, there was in Gustave Allbretcht's nothing smudged or common ; on the contrary, the drawing of the features recalled rather the definite line and character of a Holbein portrait. The mouth was almost entirely hidden by a long, sweeping moustache. The countenance was one which evinced the existence of an intellect behind it ; fastidiousness of taste and critical power, refinement and mobile sensitiveness, were perhaps its most abiding characteristics. Even without the framework of long, fair, wavy hair, cut rather straight at the ends, the face could hardly have belonged to an Englishman : not that it suggested another nationality, exactly, but the fact that Gustave Allbretcht had in his aspect so much of the cosmopolitan made him un-English to look at. His was one of those appearances which is the result of a strong personality rather than of any special family, type, country, or occupation. Even the artistic side of his nature, though most pronounced, was nevertheless not so conclusively his real self as a certain combination of qualities which produced this personality.

Lord Brampton had said of him, by way of explaining him to a Brampton uncle, endowed with all the prejudices the longest of pedigrees could bestow, and who *would* not understand Gustave, resenting the great attraction Lord Brampton felt towards this foreigner :

‘ My dear uncle, the man’s a mongrel. His father is a German, his mother is an Italian, I have made him an Englishman, Nature has made him an artist. If you will roll all that up into one man, you get my best friend and the nicest fellow that breathes.’

Lord Brampton had ever felt that in this friend existed the charm and power of genius, and had loved to bask in the mental sunshine which the spontaneity, the independence, the power of enthusiastic delight and admiration for beauty which the make called genius, allied to Gustave’s sound temperament, brought with it. But he felt that though his friend possessed the charm, the sincerities, and the *imprévus* of genius, Gustave had not, as an individual, the self-confidence which asserted its existence. It was left for him, Lord Brampton, to insist on his friend’s great value to those who were slow at recognising its very distinguishing order. As in the case of many artistic tempera-

ments, Gustave Allbretcht had to pay for his extra fineness and quickness of sensibility by the plague called *nerves*, and, when not at his ease, suffered from the discomforts of restlessness and self-conscious shyness. He had, however, very little vanity, and sufficient intellect, judgment, and self-control to restrain these often very trying characteristics from worrying or fidgeting other people; but they had made him, as a rule, fonder of his own society than of that of casual acquaintances. He had found very early in life that contact with people produced in him often a nervousness which was quite irrational. People were too much to him. He felt he gave himself away unnecessarily to chance acquaintances, and this landed him in what his very scrupulous taste considered as insincerities. His temperament made the ordinary companionship of acquaintances a weakening rather than a strengthening influence in his life, though his desire to give sympathy, and his power of doing so, made him the best of friends.

As years went on, and he passed through the twenties to the thirties, the sincerity of his nature and his great and uncommon gifts secured to him many very valuable friends; but

none equalled in intimacy or affection his friendship for Lord Brampton. This friendship had begun when they were boys. Lord Billington, Lord Brampton's father, was a great magnate in the evangelical world. Gustave's father had been given an introduction to him when he had visited London to attend an ecclesiastical conference. Dr. Allbretcht took Gustave, then a boy of sixteen, with him ; and before they returned to Germany Lord Billington invited them to stay at Brampton, his country seat. Lord Brampton was then fifteen, supposed to be delicate, clever at most things, but caring for nothing so much as drawing. Over this taste he and Gustave fraternised. Quite truly had Lord Brampton said Nature had made Gustave an artist. Nothing had touched his brain so vividly as the ideas which reached it through his eye and ear. So far he might have become either a painter or a musician with equal contentment. But when it came to his faculty for construction, form and colour came to him as natural modes of expressing his impressions, not sound. All this, and all it meant to Gustave, in his true individual life, was quite unknown ground to Dr. Allbretcht and his wife. She was the

daughter of an Italian Protestant refugee, and nothing was more remote from the interest of either father or mother than art or the art world. To Lord Billington likewise these were as zero in the real interests of life. So, as the intimacy between their sons ripened into friendship, Brampton and Gustave found a yet more particular link than even their love of art—namely, antagonism towards the want of sympathy at home for the taste which engrossed their strongest interests. They discovered the same arid spot existed in their family lives; and before the first short visit was over the boys had found a common ground which started the firmest and most intimate friendship of their lives.

Lord Brampton was supposed to be delicate, and after his mother's death, which occurred when he was seven years old, his father, the kindest of men, lived in a chronic state of anxiety about his health. When the Allbretchts returned to Germany after their first visit to Lord Billington, Lord Brampton easily contrived to make the family doctor say it would be better for his health to travel than to return to Eton. A pressing invitation arrived from the Allbretchts; a tutor was

annexed, and for the greater part of three years Lord Brampton travelled about Germany, the Allbretcht family becoming in a way responsible for him—their home being his when he rested from his travels, and Gustave returning with him when he went to England on visits to his father. When he was nineteen he went to Oxford, and Gustave, then twenty, ostensibly began his life as an artist by first studying at Munich, and proceeding thence to Rome. The friendship with Lord Brampton, by airing the tastes and grievances which they had in common, had done this for Gustave : it had emboldened him to assert definitely to his parents his intention of making art his profession. It distressed them at first ; but father, mother, and son all liked each other the better when all argument and contention concerning his future ended by Gustave summoning up sufficient courage to make it quite clear to his parents that an artist he meant to be : with their approbation if it were possible to obtain it—without, if such obtaining were impossible. When Oxford was a matter of the past for Lord Brampton, and Gustave returned to Germany from his studies in Italy, the friends each sought the other's company at

least once a year, to do something or go somewhere together. Lord Brampton had definitely chosen landscape-painting as his constant occupation, and his work soon rose above the level of ordinary amateur art. Still, though it possessed certain qualities which were first-rate of their kind, it lacked a something which professional art possesses ; and this lack gave his critical relations a ground on which to lament the 'craze,' as they called it, which made 'poor Brampton' waste all his time painting second-rate pictures.

His father had not exactly opposed his taste, but treated it as a *pis aller*. He said with a sigh, 'It is an innocent amusement. Of course, I should have wished Brampton would have taken up with the same earnestness a more serious interest ; but, considering his want of health, I am glad he has found something to do which amuses him and keeps him so much out in the open air.'

Different indeed was such a view of their vocation from that taken by Gustave and Brampton of their beloved art, spelt by them with the biggest of A's. But the casual view taken by his English friends and relations of his art made Lord Brampton all the more

eager in seeking Gustave as a companion, and in choosing painting as an occupation. The fervent boyish friendship settled down into each being in a way necessary to the other, and their making for each other's society as often as their work allowed of their meeting.

CHAPTER VII

Well, we are all *condamnés*, as Victor Hugo says: ‘*les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis*:’ we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest in art and song. For our one chance is in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. High passions give one this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, political or religious enthusiasm, or the “enthusiasm of humanity.” Only, be sure it is passion, that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art’s sake, has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments’ sake.

WALTER PATER.

IN this way had passed the lives of the two men who joined the Lovats and Lena. The talk at dinner was pleasant. Lord Brampton forced the shyness out of his friend Allbretcht by turning the conversation on to the subjects which he knew were interesting and exciting to him. Lord Brampton, silent and indolent as a rule, could excite good talk in

others with great success when he chose. On this occasion he wanted Sir Bernard, whom he liked, to see his other, more intimate friend to advantage. Just as dinner came to an end they got on to Wagner.

‘You will not have finished that subject for a long time,’ said Constance. ‘I want to hear all every one has to say about Wagner; so when you have done smoking, please come up to us.’

‘Your friend of the Apostle Kirche is interesting and uncommon,’ she continued, as she and Lena walked leisurely up the wide staircase.

Lena answered rather dreamily, ‘He seems to know a great deal.’

‘Whether he does or does not, he talks about it very well,’ Constance replied.

‘The great deal?’ Lena asked, brightening up.

‘Yes,’ said Constance, ‘the great deal and everything else besides. He has a ready wit, many words, and I should think plenty of culture.’

This life, that such people habitually lived, a life of keen mental relish—what a different and fuller one from any Lena had lived in before! She did not feel it strange; indeed, she felt more herself, more satisfied in it, as if it were her

natural atmosphere and soil, which strengthened and refreshed her: it affected her as a plant is affected when it is put in the right conditions in which it can live and grow happily. The flavour of the best books Mr. St. John had given her to read, the most civilised modern books, seemed to have got into her real living life, into the intercourse with the people about her. And how much more to the point was the flavour in real life than in the books!

As Constance and she settled down in two arm-chairs by the window in the sitting-room, Constance began again: 'Some one—who is it?—says strangeness is an element in all the greatest beauty. It strikes me this Mr. Allbretcht has that kind of strangeness—uncommonness, essential to the greatest beauty—without exactly possessing the beauty itself. But his appearance is certainly distinguished; do you not think so, Lena?'

'Yes, perhaps,' Lena said slowly. 'He could not be an Englishman, yet he talks English quite well and fluently.'

'Much better than English people do,' Constance added; 'more carefully and correctly. And he is even better at monologuing than I am, Lena; he makes even me quite content to be

silent.' Voices were heard in the passage, and Sir Bernard opened the door. 'Now about Wagner,' Constance began at once, as the three men came across the room towards where she and Lena were sitting. 'You must say it all over again if you have come to an end.'

'Mr. Allbretcht must give you a discourse,' Sir Bernard said; 'he is a real disciple, and knows all about it.'

'Indeed I am no musician,' protested Allbretcht, 'though I love music to distraction. Also, I know, had Wagner expressed his poetical genius in the art I pursue, we should have had a tremendous painter. His genius touches, in a cosmopolitan way, artists in every line, and makes them feel his art is theirs, and theirs is his, in all essentials, and both and all ought to be on the widest lines of emotional inspiration.'

'Bravo, Gustave!' said Lord Brampton; 'nothing like a very heavy order to throw off with! I feel savage I am not going on with you to Bayreuth.'

'It is your own fault, my dear fellow,' replied Gustave; 'you would not make up your mind—you were so lordly and deliberate in deciding.'

'No, I wasn't lordly or deliberate ; I was only lazy,' answered Lord Brampton. 'It involved a letter, and the letter didn't get written.'

'Well, whichever sin it was you sinned, I am as sorry as you are that you are punished by not going. Every one,' Allbretcht continued with emphasis, 'ought to go to Bayreuth, if only to know what beautiful and impressive effects on an orchestra can be produced, and in order to attain a high standard of taste in instrumentation. As you go to the Tribune in Florence, or the Belle Arte in Venice, or your own National Gallery in London, whether you paint or not, in order to know what paint can express from the highest examples of painting, so you ought to go to Bayreuth to know what an opera performance can be, whether you are musical or not. As to describing what makes Bayreuth Bayreuth—that is not easy to put into words. The first-rate in music, as in other arts, can never be at all adequately described in words, only most barely suggested ; for that element of perfection which touches the sensibilities on their finest side passes out of the region of words—it becomes emotion.'

'Of course, I haven't been to Bayreuth,' Lord Brampton said ; 'but I don't think I

should ever put Wagner as a musician on the top rail. Doubtless he is a great deal besides—a poet, a dramatist, anything you like ; but as a musician pure and simple, surely not so great as either Bach or Beethoven ?'

'He is a power !' exclaimed Constance ; 'he must be a greater power than any musician ever was, or we, and all the rest of the hundreds, would not be hurrying from all parts of the world to an out-of-the-way little Bavarian town to hear him at his best.'

'Ah ! but the flock of sheep business may have a great deal to do with that, Lady Lovat,' said Lord Brampton. 'And, mind you, in the days of Beethoven and Bach there were not the trains to take the flocks to wherever the first sheep chose to lead them.'

'Yes, but what started the first sheep ?' rejoined Allbretcht. 'What inspired the cult in the first instance ? The great man came, aroused, of course, the opposition of the Pharisees and Sadducees, inspired fanaticism in his followers, fought his ground like more than a man, made himself heard, and conquered. His followers are, accordingly, happy in being his disciples and worshippers. That is what you feel at Bayreuth ; you have more the service of

a religious cult than the performance of an opera. And that, I take it, Lady Lovat, is the power.'

'Yes, that is all true, I daresay,' she answered; 'but that is not all. Some people say the very mischief is in Wagner. I don't feel it as mischief, but I know what they mean. It is very exciting and tears you to pieces. I like to be torn to pieces, but some people don't. They think it is demoralising. Now, Mr. Allbretcht, how can you explain what it is in his music which tears me to pieces and makes some people feel wicked? I have a lovely acquaintance—she is almost a friend, she sings so well: she says Wagner makes her feel quite wicked, lawless, and inclined to go into a wood and scream. If she takes a good dose of him she has to wash it down with Beethoven or Handel as an antidote to the poison.'

'Of course, I have not the pleasure of knowing your friend, and speak under correction,' Gustave answered smiling, bowing towards Constance; 'but if you will forgive my saying so, I think she must, in listening to Wagner, connect the excitement which undoubtedly his art produces very powerfully indeed with something in her own feelings of which she

does not approve. But you cannot blame Wagner for that. My own conviction is, that through the expression of his art he has dug out of human nature a new field for passionate emotion. If you enjoy it simply for its own interest and impressiveness, and for the beautiful stories it translates with such dramatic force, it cannot hurt you.'

(‘Shockheaded Peter has never been in love,’ thought Constance as she looked up at him with wide-open eyes.)

‘If, in addition,’ continued Gustave, ‘you weave feelings into it which are attractive, though lawless, you create an accumulative force of excitement which has doubtless more power on account of Wagner’s music. But again I maintain Wagner is not to blame for that.’

‘No,’ said Constance; ‘all music,—Schubert, Schumann, Beethoven, Brahms, all emotional, passionate music—does the same, though not in the same degree as Wagner’s.’

‘His music seems a bigger thing than mere music,’ said Gustave; ‘it stretches beyond the mere limits of sound. It seems not only to excite our musical sensibilities, but it unlocks our life of emotion in every direction.’

‘You must admit, Gustave, though,’ put in

Lord Brampton, 'there is an anti-puritan flavour, to say the least of it, about Wagner.'

'All the better,' retorted Allbretcht; 'the puritans demoralised art by separating beauty from purity. I believe to those who are really in touch with Wagner's music it is strong enough to be sufficient as an excitement on its own lines of imaginative invention—sufficient as a delight, an engrossing interest, a satisfying food, without necessarily feeding the egotism of any personal feelings.'

'You mean,' said Constance, 'that Wagner has discovered a new field of operation in human nature; he feeds a sense which he has himself created.'

'Precisely,' Gustave answered; 'in a way, I think all great original genius does the same. Your Pre-Raphaelites, in the time of their true fervour, exercised a power and created an enthusiasm much on the same lines as our Wagner. These quite modern days have produced in England the painting, and in Germany the music, whose power lies not only in the expression of the special attributes of the two arts, but beyond; echoing the complex, mysterious, half-moral and half-religious sentiment of the nineteenth century poetry.'

In the Pre-Raphaelite painting I feel the same strange and overpowering attraction that I do in hearing Wagner's music. You are held by a power, a glamour, in both, which is not explained merely by their value as artists.'

'Mesmerism got into the arts,' exclaimed Constance.

'Something very like it, I believe,' said Sir Bernard. 'We are bold people in giving ourselves up to the effects of this mesmerism by going to Bayreuth.'

'You do well to be bold, Sir Bernard Lovat,' rejoined Allbretcht with enthusiasm, 'for alone at Bayreuth can you realise to the full the subtle and very great power which can be expressed by dramatic music.'

'Yes; but,' protested Sir Bernard, 'let us come back to the A B C of the matter. Is this influence which Wagner exercises, however vitalising it may be, wholesome or unwholesome? You may treat any criminal instinct you like to mention as a developing influence; but that will not make the crime which results from it less a crime, or our courting the opportunities which promote it more excusable. If Wagner excites in some people a wicked condition of lawlessness—well, then ——'

‘By all means,’ ejaculated Allbretcht, with an eager gesture forward of both hands, ‘let them refrain from the dream which to them is poison. But such weaker brethren cannot expect to stop the tide of Wagner’s influence, any more than they could turn the waters of the Rhine and make them flow down from Cologne up to Coblenz; for his influence, like the development of his genius, is, I take it, naturally consequent on the conditions of our special modern civilisation.’

‘At any rate, we must go to Bayreuth,’ said Constance conclusively. ‘You needn’t be afraid, dear Bernard: any number of Wagners wouldn’t make you wicked or lawless.’

Sir Bernard laughed and blushed. ‘I am not the only one going,’ he answered.

‘We must all look after ourselves,’ Constance went on, ‘and leave each other alone; that’s the safest way.’

‘If you have the patience to listen,’ said Gustave, ‘I should like to give you another long prose before I have done fighting for Wagner. We must all remember that to so very many people the charm of all music is most purely an emotional charm. Music puts these, while listening to it, in the state of

pleasant excitement which, so to say, brings the element of idealism into the sensations of the brain ; it produces, in fact, what opium, the correct amount of champagne, or any other stimulant produces, which sets to rest all nerve irritation, and promotes delightful impressions through this excitement. I think there can be no doubt but that Wagner's music does all this more than any other, independent of melody, harmony, or any other purely musical quality ; and no one can justly call this excitement other than a physical sensation. But, all this granted, the question is : How does he use this power ? In what direction ? Is it to stimulate the minds of his audience to the conception of elevating beauty ; or to interest his audience in degrading impressions ? For therein lies the morality or immorality of his art. In the first place, as an artist and a poet, I maintain he justifies his position as one of the truly great by sustaining his art on the highest lines both as regards the general construction and the detail. We find ideality in conception which aims at suggesting beauty, spiritual as well as physical, in the general form and inspiration of the work, enriched and vivified by dramatic realism in depicting emotion as well as in the more

material carrying out of detail. I suppose we should all agree that those are the lines on which all the greatest art has been the greatest in all times. But Wagner goes further in the didactic line, and in using his genius to accentuate moral and spiritual beauty. Think of the stories he has chosen to put into poetry and music! *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, and above all *Parsifal*!

‘How about *Tristram* and *Isolda*? ’ asked Lord Brampton.

‘Much might be said even for *Tristram* and *Isolda*,’ replied Gustave.

‘The archaic passions expressed with biblical simplicity, my dear Gustave; as that horrid cynic and best of men, our friend Mason, described Wagner’s stories.’

‘Never mind, Mr. Allbretcht; poor Lord Brampton is soured because he is not going on to Bayreuth,’ Constance said.

‘In any case,’ rejoined Gustave, ‘Wagner is always real and intense in his feeling; and, in that special power of delineating with truth and dramatic force and fervour true passion, he has, I think, but two equals in the annals of the art of the past—Giotto and Albert Dürer. He is morality and purity personified

compared to the French school of cynicism, which is perverting the taste of the world so hideously at the present moment. Its creed is the idealism of ugliness, of all human games of intellectual cleverness the most degraded and artificial. Mind, I do not mean the realism which aims at truth, though truth from an outward aspect only—the most materialistic reading of truth ; I mean the searching out of ugliness and vice, revelling in it, and idealising it in art—the desire that vice should triumph over virtue. These artists work on the lines that viciousness shows a further development in human nature than does virtue ; that in vice there is real life, in virtue there is stagnation ; that do what you can you can't be happy—if you are good, you are stupid, and know nothing of the flavour of life. If you get the flavour of life, you must get it at the cost of its tragedies, and of getting moreover, *blasé* over the tragedies ; and, though very unfortunate, this, according to their creed, is the nobler course, as being truer to human nature. The worst of it is that many among these are true artists, and wield a great power as such. One of your greatest men said so conclusively what made art true art when he said it was a matter of

“sincerity of emotion.” And doubtless the power of these French artists lies in the “sincerity of emotion” which they feel towards their hideous, vile subjects. But that lands us on to a wider ground still: is art itself a good and elevating influence, or a debasing and bad one in the world’s civilisation? Now, the art and poetry of Wagner distinctly direct us upwards; they express very fully, doubtless, the emotional side of life, which has to be fought with and through in order to reach the higher and more spiritual level; but there is always a sense of largeness and noble truth in the feeling of even the most human side of his delineations. We must remember that the creed of our great nineteenth century school of poets and artists is a renaissance of reality—not realism, but reality; truth in seeing, in feeling, in thinking; the real core of truth, cleared of all the fantastic embroideries with which artificial standards in taste and feeling have smothered the natural human sense of beauty; and we find new lines of feeling followed, and unexpected combinations in consequence in their work. For instance, spirituality allied to no creed or dogma, earnest purity allied to passion, realism allied to poetry—all the

alliances, in fact, in the whole history of art past and present, which subvert the more stilted forms of belief and codes of morality, which grew out of class prejudice and strictly definite religious creeds. Wagner digs out of unadulterated human nature for his motives; he goes to the real spring for his inspirations.'

'Well, I should say, Gustave,' broke in Lord Brampton, 'that the earthly and emotional stepping-stones in Wagner's work are lingered on rather longer than is absolutely necessary for the attainment of a footing on a spiritual height. I fancy he rather enjoyed his temporary location.'

'You are as cynical as a Frenchman, Lord Brampton!' exclaimed Constance. 'I am sure we all agree with Mr. Allbretcht that Wagner is the most moral of poets and musicians, and his stories as didactic as Dr. Watts' hymns. I have always thought *Lohengrin* quite a lesson to us moderns. Welcoming to our aid the miraculous in our dire distress, then turning faithless and inquisitive when we are comfortable! Elsa quite deserved to lose him. Now, I am sure, Bernard, you are quite convinced by Mr. Allbretcht.'

'Whatever is quite the contrary to that

horrid school of French cynicism, I should think, must be right !' said Sir Bernard, smiling pleasantly at Mr. Allbretcht. 'I may, as an Englishman, be prejudiced ; but the few French novels belonging to the school you mention which I have attempted to read I could not go on with—they made me quite ill.'

Lena all this time had not spoken a word. She had been keenly listening and delighting in listening, but Constance felt a desire to draw her forward in a more active form.

'All this talking about music makes me want some,' she said, rising. 'Lena, do, dear, play us that lovely little thing of Schumann's, one of the *Albumblätter*; the one I went crazy over the last evening we were at home.' And she went to the piano and opened it. Lena rose at once, and, crossing the room, sat down at it. Silent as she had been, she was not shy. She neither sought nor avoided notice from others ; in fact, she thought very little of herself in any way. Chronic sadness had dug very deeply down in a nature very sensitive to pain, and had left very little room for superficial sensibilities, such as shyness and self-consciousness. How often, though, may we find these inconvenient minor feelings floating

above the strata of simple, unegoistical reality and true feeling, asserting themselves most uncomfortably in intercourse, and giving to others quite a false impression of their owner's character. But the kind of sorrow Lena had suffered strikes a note of tragedy in life which destroys sensitiveness to the slighter emotions of pleasure and pain, and kills for ever and aye the superficial vanities. The powers of sensation are focussed for graver, more solemn things. That secret note of personal passion, belonging to these graver, more solemn things, indicated doubtless often by a feeling of self-conscious shyness, had not, as yet, entered Lena's life. Till now her intensest personal feelings had always been in the life and interests of those whom pity had made so passionately dear and absorbing to her. Her own self had played a second part in her own life. Her music alone, among her occupations, had belonged to her secret, deeper course of personal feelings. From a very inner sanctuary had come the expression of herself in music. She played beautifully the most beautiful music. 'You meet Beethoven so well half-way,' Constance had said when Lena played his music to her. All the passion, the

pity, and the sorrow of her life she unconsciously worked out in her playing: unconsciously, for, like all real music to those who possess a true native gift, the delight in sound held paramount sway at the moment of its expression, whatever background of experience may have developed and perfected such power of expression.

She played the little piece Constance had asked for. They were all delighted; Lord Brampton threw up his almost feminine white hands, and exclaimed, 'How good!' as he came forward with a little quaint prancing movement he indulged in when pleased. Gustave Allbretcht was ecstatic! It might not be Romanesque architecture which had the power to light the flame of enthusiasm: never mind! all the same, it was the true artistic fibre, beauty felt and expressed in music instead. Shyness vanished with ecstasy and satisfaction! He flew across the room, and with gentle but very eager courtesy begged for more. Lena then played Schumann's *Schlummerlied*.

'Beautiful,' he said, still standing close to her; and as the last note sighed away he went on, appearing to be speaking more to himself than directly to her: 'That seems always to me

to mean more than a *Schlummerlied*. It sings a rhapsody of regret ; too full of tender sentiment to be wholly unhappy—more plaintively saying, “The pity of it ! Aye, the pity of it !”

‘How true !’ thought Lena ; what an exact translation in words of her own feeling about it ! She turned and looked straight up into his eyes as she did on the *Apostle Platz*. Again with that look came a sense to both—the recognition of some intimate ground in common below the surface. A sense quite impossible to be in any way expressed in words by two newly made acquaintances. Even with intimate friends how often real intercourse recoils into surface commonplacisms and mere words by the foolish endeavour to strain words into trying to express the delight in a sense of intimacy. But when two strangers almost suddenly become aware of a reflection of their own selves in the other, then the only possible result is complete silence. But a silence which was, nevertheless, in this case felt. As Lena turned round to the piano again, she felt possessed of a new experience which she shared alone with the personality of this stranger standing behind her. As he stood close to her, it was as if a lasso, a mesmeric cord, had

been slung round them and had caught them both into a radius of mutual understanding and sympathy, apart from every one else. Pausing a moment, her fingers on the keys, she began very quietly playing the last of Schumann's *Kinder Stücke*, *Der Dichte spricht*.

Gustave was still standing behind her as she rose, his eyes still fixed on her. He murmured a 'Thank you.' His rather dreamy gaze seemed to be taking in more than Lena as she sat there : a beyond as well, to which Schumann's exquisite poetry in music had floated him. His eyes followed her as she slid quietly across the room back to her seat near Constance. He watched the long, soft, flowing lines of her simple dress, and felt delight in the fine distinction of delicate finish in her appearance and movements ; the perfect grace of quiet gravity and restraint ; the pure, faint fairness of her colouring, and the strength and earnestness of the straightforward expression of her eye.

All about her fascinated him and inspired in him an admiration far beyond that of the eye only. He was entranced. No personality he had ever before encountered had given him the same satisfying delight and contentment. He had never before seen, he thought, such

dignity and simplicity, such utter absence of nervousness and self-consciousness, such perfect harmony in the restful atmosphere of the outside with what of the inner that outside expressed. And to think that all this reposeful grace of calm was but the shell hiding an artistic sensibility and enthusiasm which enabled her to produce the beautiful music he had been listening to !

‘What is the use,’ he exclaimed with a sigh, ‘of *talking* of beauty and art ! Our eyes and ears alone can realise what they mean ; such music as that preaches the real convincing arguments on the subject.’

How often had Gustave felt, though in but a half-acknowledged way to himself, how inadequate and futile were all the theories and ideas he could put so easily and eloquently into words, to prove the value of beauty and art ! Now the sight of the living woman who seemed to him to be the incarnation of that perfect finish and harmonious completeness it had been the aim of all his artistic efforts to attain to in his work—this personality made him feel conclusively how completely wide of the mark are any words or ideas to explain the real meaning of beauty. Not that he realised in the least

that he was falling in love. All the same, for the first time in his life, he felt an admiration he could not have talked of, an enthusiasm he could not have put into words. But he only recognised the emotion consciously as part of the idolatry for that beauty which he worshipped as a religion. True artist he had ever been since the day he had vowed his life to the service of art. He was not accustomed to seek for any strong interest outside or beyond such service, for in it he had hitherto found complete fulness of life. As quite a young man he had had slight romantic admirations for many beautiful girls and women—admirations excited when he was still under the bracing influence of his strict Lutheran home; but these, one after another, soon became merged, and as far as personal interest went forgotten, in the earnestness of his art-studies, and in the proving to his own people the worth and value of the profession he had chosen despite their opposition.

As to Lena, she felt half away in a dream as Constance, Sir Bernard, and Lord Brampton poured thanks upon her for the pleasure her playing had given them. She felt a vague, strange feeling that another, till that evening

a stranger, had suddenly come within the radius of her intimate life : that now, somehow, though she might never see him again, he would remain ever connected in her mind with her picture, her sacred picture ; and also with that inexpressible something that music meant to her. Moreover, his enthusiasm for Wagner, all he had said that evening, struck her as what she would have liked to feel and say had she been sufficiently clever and experienced to do so. Hitherto Mr. St. John had been the only person with whom she had ever felt inclined to talk out her enthusiasms ; but it had always happened, whenever they had reached the point in a conversation when she had felt most inclined to be communicative, he had invariably cut that conversation short. He seemed determined not to discuss the most interesting subjects with her. Gustave Allbretcht, once having lost his shyness, had, together with refined culture and sensitiveness, the foreign absence of reserve. This combination charmed Lena, and made her feel as if, mentally, she was breathing more freely. She had lived habitually in the atmosphere of pent-up feeling, and his perfectly natural and spontaneous expression and discussion of emotions

had the effect of open-air freedom and sunlight on her mind.

Lena had not left the piano long when Lord Brampton called out to Gustave, still standing where she had left him, 'We must be going, my dear Gus, if we are to be up at six o'clock at our work ; it's getting late.'

And then they said good-night. Gustave stopped before Lena's chair. His shyness returned in full force, and he was preparing to make his stiffest and most distant bow when he met Lena's clear eyes, and saw her hand held out very simply. He took it for an instant, muttered a word she could not hear, and followed Lord Brampton and Sir Bernard out of the room.

When back in their West of England home, how distinctly, morbidly distinctly, did Lena's memory recall and hold every moment of that evening ! The twilight of the long summer day coming through the three windows of the foreign room, with its large, ugly velvet furniture ; a lamp shaded and hid away as much as possible in a distant corner ; the sound of the splashing of the fountain in the garden below, and of Gustave's voice preaching Wagner—every look, every attitude, every gesture, had impressed itself on her memory.

CHAPTER VIII

A King Love is, whose palace where he sojourneth
Is called the heart ; there draws he quiet breath
At first, with brief or longer slumbering.

DANTE, VITA NUOVA.

‘BUT your friend is very civilised—quite a fellow-creature, Lena,’ Constance said as the men walked down the passage out of hearing.

‘He is no longer specially my friend ; he is common property.’

‘Well, our common property talks capitally and makes lovely bows. He puts his feet together and descends over them in a courtly foreign fashion, like any number of *plénipotentiaires extraordinaire*s to the Court of St. James. But I should like to see his work. I don’t expect it’s as good as his talk. Powers that diffuse themselves like that fail so often in achievement. First-rate achievement so seldom goes along with the faculty of talking about it. The fact is, life isn’t long

enough for everything. Lord Brampton says, though, that he has great genius as a painter. Lena, I must have a full and detailed account of the story of the Apostle Kirche picture, when you are not tired.'

'Yes, you shall; I feel as if I was in a dream. It has all come about so strangely.'

Constance looked at her scrutinisingly, but said nothing. Few situations arose having much atmosphere about them, but Constance became very quickly alive to that atmosphere. Lena, not having dissected her impressions or sensations, only knew that her picture, the original of her picture, and this stranger were now all woven together, and that life had become fuller and more satisfying since the morning.

'Well, we must go to bed,' Constance said at last, emerging out of the depths of the big arm-chair she had been lounging in, 'or we shall never get to that train to-morrow morning.'

'My dear Constance,' Sir Bernard said, coming into the room, having returned from walking with Lord Brampton and Gustave Allbretcht to their rooms, 'I hope you won't mind, but I have asked those two men to join us to-morrow, and we will go all together on

to Rothenburg, which they both say is so well worth seeing.'

'That's just what I hoped you would do. I want to see Rothenburg, and with them. Lord Brampton always was fun, but that friend of his is quite delightful, isn't he, Bernard ?'

'Yes, he is very clever, and gives his friends the benefit of it, too, in very good language. For a foreigner, too, he gives one a feeling of confidence. But you know, Constance, I am old-fashioned : I never did and I never shall feel quite as easy with foreigners as with natives.'

'That's only, dear, because you never knew any really intimately. You frighten them—you frighten everybody a *leetle* bit, you know ; you say so little, and you look so much !'

'I shall say nothing at all now,' Sir Bernard answered ; 'you are generally enough to silence me, you talk so well and so much ; but your German friend is almost better than you at the game, Constance.'

'Yes, I really believe he is. You see, his father is the preacher ; it was only my grandfather, so the hereditary power of monologuing is more diluted in me.'

The next morning they all started together by train along the Rhine. The journey

seemed to have all the delights of a new and a more blessed existence to Lena: the pleasant, clever chatting, the real baking sunshine, the beauty of the Rhine, and the novelty of foreign lands. Constance and Gustave were the talkers. Lena was a first-rate listener, and her presence inspired Gustave with an intense interest in everything that was said and done, inasmuch as she was there to hear it said and see it done. The weather was lovely, and the Rhine, despite her popularity, very delicious. Mayence being reached, the line passes up into Bavaria through beautiful fresh pastures, the curves of field and valley flowing graciously down the hill-sides, disfigured by no lines of hedges squaring, as in England, the fields into a check-board: but divided down below by the curving lines of a stream, here and there darting sparkles of diamonds, but traced mostly only by the borderings of silver willows, water-reeds, and tufted heads of creamy, fluffy meadow-sweet rising from its edge. Past solemn shadow of dark forest as well as sweet, fresh-smiling pasture and peacefully nestled villages, the train only too hastily travels on. Especially tantalising

not to linger longer in sight of those villages : groups of high-pitched tiled roofing, plots of red in all the green of wood and pasture—very red, though toned by moss, lichens, and above all by beautifying time. Some of these villages are crowded within old fortified walls ; all clustered round their church, whose pointed steeple, rising high above all other dwellings, aspiring to the sky, is a symbol echoed in the hearts of the little communities of an aspiration above the necessities of daily work and bread-winning.

It was late in the evening when Rothenburg was reached. The glimmer of fading, rosy after-glow had given up the struggle of lighting the town, and did little more than faintly warm the sky above it ; the nearly full moon, and the old lamps swung on chains across the streets, alone showing what could be seen of the buildings. Lord Brampton and Allbretcht knew the place, but to the others it was new.

‘But it is miraculously fascinating. From our windows upstairs it is glorious !’ exclaimed Constance enthusiastically, when they found themselves waiting for supper in the dining-room. ‘Why has one never heard of it ?’

‘Did I not tell you it was worth seeing?’ Lord Brampton answered eagerly. ‘And wait till the morning, and then you will see what you will see.’

‘It isn’t, then, only the moonlight and the deep shadows that make it so uncommonly striking?’ Sir Bernard said, more wary than Constance in his enthusiasm.

‘Oh, Lord, no!’ Brampton answered. ‘Not a single modern finger-mark has disfigured it! Situation, all, is perfect.’

So next morning they all tired themselves out by trying to exhaust the interest of the place; but one morning’s energy did not exhaust it.

‘Now, Gus, I won’t stand this sort of thing any longer!’ said Lord Brampton, when they all met together for luncheon. ‘You have spouted and done the all-knowing the whole morning. You must come and work with me this morning; I have only got you here for this one day.’

‘I must rest after lunch, and so must you, Lena,’ Constance said. ‘All these raptures and ecstasies are thoroughly exhausting. Then I shall go and try and sketch, too. I can a little; and I’m sure if one had never sketched before, Rothenburg would make one begin.’

So at five o'clock Constance and Lena walked out of the old gateway near the hotel, and Constance sat down on a wall to take a sketch of the towers from outside. After sitting by her an hour or more, Lena got up.

'I should like to go down by the stream and investigate that little chapel. Do you mind being alone here, Constance ?'

'Like it, my dear. This is all wrong, and I shall lose my temper with it very soon. Patience and absolute concentration, Mr. Allbretcht was saying, is the only way to produce really great art, so the sooner you go the better for this great production. By the way, I mean to ask him to join us and go on with us to Bayreuth. He is good for my character. You and Bernard are so indolent, you give up all the talk to me ; but Mr. Allbretcht makes me feel he is the better man of the two at it. He knows so much more ; I shall grow modest, in time, if he stays.'

Lena wandered down the road, looking round her and back up at the wonderful group of mediaeval buildings hoisted high by terraced walls and massive buttresses, striking down into the green hill-side and up into the air with such bold erectness. Towers still

higher rise at every angle and projection of the wall as it encircles each bend of the hill. Facing the west, and catching every ray of the afternoon sun, the light glowed every moment more warmly on this splendid pile of mediæval architecture and fortification. How fiercely it glowed in orange and scarlet as Lena looked up at it from the purple shadow of the valley below, already cooled by the shades of evening ! Everything in Rothenburg is colour. As Lord Brampton had said, not a modern finger-mark has disfigured it !

As Lena, standing on the bridge over the stream, looked from one extreme end of the town to the other, she thought to herself, 'I can imagine colour being almost as exciting as music.' And then, still standing on the bridge looking up at this blaze of vigorous effects in line and colour, she recalled much that Gustave Allbretcht had said that morning. She hardly knew that Constance saying she would ask him to join them had added a delight in her appreciation of the old fortified town she was looking at ; but it had, all the same. It had very much helped in beautifying it to her senses.

The water was running below with a clear,

rippling warble ; and above on the hills she heard the voices of men singing a part-song, a simple *volkslied*, as they walked along. Faintly, then more clearly, it rang along the hill-side. They must have been walking quickly, for the sound changed quickly in intensity ; but true and right and musical it always was. As it grew faint in the distance, Lena said with a half-sigh, ‘ People don’t do such things in Somersetshire ! ’

This thought of Somersetshire wakened her up, and she turned. Cool and purple and blue the valley looked to her eyes after resting on the reflection of scarlet and orange sunlight up on the sky-line of towers, churches, and steep-roofed, red-tiled dwellings ! Yet the valley too was full of colour. A vivid green cornfield lay near the turn the water took beyond the bridge, looking so very green above the liquid blue of the stream’s shadow. Fuller blue again were the cornflowers dashed in amongst the vivid emerald blades ; and brighter, less modified by tone, and in greater quantity, was the blue of some children’s garments who were playing near two beautiful mild-eyed oxen, unyoked from a cart, and eating their evening meal of freshly cut-grass. The walls

of the little chapel were turned from purple to russet by the glow, held even in the shadows, from the fervent warmth of sky above. Lena walked on and on, stopping to pick cornflowers and grasses by the side of the fields ; and, deserting the high-road for a footpath running through them, she was surprised when, looking up, though still in sight of the town, she saw a completely different outline of buildings against the sky she was looking up to. She had lost her bearings, and was puzzled. If she could get back to the stream, that would take her back to the bridge. But somehow it had wandered away. She saw, however, a road near, and for that she made.

Just as she stepped on to it she came almost face to face with Gustave Allbretcht. He started and stood still a second. He could not have said at the moment how she looked ; the fact that the reality of his thoughts and day-dreams stood before him was enough to make everything else for the moment, even her appearance, vague. Still, the picture of her walking out on to the road from the bright green cornfield in her soft grey hat and cloak, holding in one end of her long cloak a great bundle of beautiful flowers of the field, with the background to

her figure of the lovely, shadowed quiet of the valley and the brilliant, glowing towers crowning it, got somehow unconsciously stamped on the retina of his eye, for he recalled it often after as one of the most vivid pictures his memory could conjure up of Lena.

Full as his mind and thoughts had been of her all the afternoon while he had been making a tiresome sketch to content Lord Brampton ; romantic as was the spot in which they now met ; sudden as was the appearance of each to the other, so that his heart seemed to stop and jump uncomfortably up somewhere into his throat ; there was nothing possible left but—to be natural,—commonplacely, obviously natural. To have appeared otherwise would have been embarrassing ; so, stamping down his shyness into his boots, he came forward and said firmly, ‘ You are taking a long walk, Miss Prevost ?

‘ I have lost my way,’ Lena answered, very seriously and shortly. She too had had Gustave Allbretcht considerably in her thoughts. For the first time since they met she did feel shy—so shy that she wished he had not met her. His presence rather disturbed her ponderings about him and all he had said. If only Constance had been with her !

‘Where do you want to go?’ he asked in a matter-of-fact tone of voice.

‘I left Lady Lovat outside the gate near the hotel, and I want to go back to her. I came down the road over a bridge, past a chapel, and then I got into the fields, and it seems quite a different part of the town up there. But if you will kindly tell me how I can get back to the river, I daresay I can find my way.’

No, that he would not allow her to do by herself: she might like it or dislike it, but he intended to go with her. It was too late in the evening for her to be allowed to wander about losing her way by herself. ‘The quickest way you can go now,’ he said, ‘to get back to the hotel and that gate where you left Lady Lovat, will be straight up the path we shall come to presently, and in through the Klingen Thor, and then through the town. I will show you the way if you will allow me.’

‘I do not like to take you out of your way,’ Lena said, rather ungraciously.

‘You will not take me out of my way. I am sorry to inflict myself upon you, but you might lose your way again, and it is getting late.’ He spoke stiffly, as if almost he were offended.

‘Oh! it is very kind of you!’ Lena said,

confused. 'I should be very grateful if you would,' then added with rather a nervous little laugh, 'Only it seems so stupid to lose one's way and inflict on other people the trouble of finding it for one.'

Gustave was satisfied. The uncertain confusion of her manner pleased him better than the calm civility of her ordinary way of speaking. He at once began to talk pleasantly and naturally.

'You must let me carry your beautiful bundle,' he said, stopping. 'Please do; it is nothing for me, but you would find it heavy. We have to go up a very steep bit into the town.'

Lena was beginning to protest, but he quietly gathered up the mass of wild-flowers and grasses from her cloak in his two hands, and, taking a piece of string from his painting satchel, tied them up, and slung them with a loop from his shoulder.

'They will be all right like that, and keep fresher than if I hold them.'

It was a happy walk for both.

It was the first time they had found themselves alone together since they stood as strangers on the Apostle Platz, and it was

quite the first time that they had any conversation which could be called conversation together. There had been, however, on Gustave's side sufficient small attentions and deferences, sufficient signs that he had never been without the consciousness of her presence, even when ostensibly talking to others, to make the footing one of pleasant friendliness when he had once got over his shyness. And Gustave could be very ingenious in making himself pleasant.

‘How did it come about that you play so very beautifully?’ he asked.

And then Lena found herself describing Mr. St. John quite intimately, and all he had done for her in the way of music. Then Lady Lovat was mentioned, and she found herself extolling Constance almost as if he, Gustave, were her more intimate friend of the two. It seemed easy and natural to talk about everything, and soon Lena found herself asking him about his work—what kind of pictures he cared to paint, what had made him care to paint pictures at all.

‘I do not understand why an artist treats his work like a religion. Of course, I see he must, or he could never concentrate his powers

sufficiently to produce great art ; but I do not understand the process. You were telling Lady Lovat about it in the train, but I couldn't quite follow.'

' You mean you don't see why a man should treat what he produces with his own hands from his own perceptions with so much reverence ?'

Lena blushed. ' I did not mean I thought it was conceited, but only that there is some link I cannot trace. I do not see where the sacred obligation of producing pictures comes in to the artist himself ; though beautiful pictures are such a boon to the world, I suppose.'

' You only suppose, Miss Prevost ? Then you do not care for pictures ?' said Gustave ; and the pictures suffered, not Lena, in Gustave's mind.

' I do not know enough about them. But do explain why you feel it to be such a solemn duty to paint.'

' First, " Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," etc.—that first ; there can be no two opinions about that, you agree ?'

' Oh, of course.'

' Why my hand found it was painting it had to do was, that from the time I was quite

small, the sense of beauty which came through my eyes made me feel more alive than anything else, except, perhaps, the excitement of music. But I never wanted to compose music, but I wanted very much to be able to paint the beautiful things I saw. And the colour and the lines my eyes saw gave materials for pictures I made up in my head, so that they became quite as vivid to my mind's eye as actual scenes. Then I began putting into these scenes in my mind everything I cared for most ; and whatever is best in the world—actions, feelings, aspirations—I felt ought to be commemorated by the painter, and associated with the beauty which has been created for the enjoyment of the eye. It seems to me so obvious that we are meant to enjoy beauty, and that it's as unnatural for a mother not to love her child as for all human nature not to do so.'

'I think,' Lena said diffidently, 'when you feel happy, beauty is very enjoyable ; but it seems to bring in a kind of tragic note when you feel miserable.'

'Ah, but it always ennobles every state,' exclaimed Gustave. 'Its effect intensifies feeling, doubtless ; but while we exist we ought

to feel. We are put into the world to feel, to have a full sense of existence always; and we ought never to stagnate unless we are ill, or asleep. It is your Puritans who have done so much mischief in England by their trying to stamp out all the enjoyment which we are meant to get from the eye and ear. They have brought about the materialistic turn our intellects have all taken by making out that the emotional side is wicked. People are dosed with too much information about the facts of life, to the utter neglect of the training of instincts and emotions.'

'Then do you think it is the religion of art which ought to replace beauty on its pedestal, and undo the work of the Puritans?' asked Lena.

'Yes, of course. Only I should try and include the side of moral beauty in human nature in our modern art, which the Puritans did appreciate, and try and weave it with the emotional instincts into art.'

'But that seems a great deal for pictures to try and do,' said Lena.

Gustave laughed, and then sighed. 'It's a great deal more than I shall ever be able to do, I dare say, Miss Prevost. Does it bore you,

all this talking about a subject that does not interest you ?'

'Oh, no ; it does interest me. I do want so very much to know more about painting, for I see it is to many people what music is to me : to Lord Brampton, for instance, even though he is not, I suppose, a great artist.'

'He would have been a very distinguished landscape artist had he not been Lord Brampton. But nothing is expected of him but first-rate amateur work, and you will find many people fall short of achieving the best they are capable of doing merely for that reason ; and one other, perhaps—their having no necessity to earn their bread. But Brampton has the true passionate love of work for its own sake, and a great sense of the beauty and poetical suggestiveness of Nature.'

'But please tell me how you could unite Puritan morality and emotional beauty in pictures ?' Lena asked. 'I can see very well that beauty is a healthy and delightful thing to many of us ; but I should have thought Nature herself would have taught the lesson of beauty as a moral good, better than art.'

'In the first place, as your Browning has it,
" 'Tis the taught already that profits by teach-

ing." Every treatment of natural beauty by human skill, which is the result of a heaven-born gift, not only accentuates that beauty and makes it more noticed and admired, but inspires an interest which has in it the element of human sympathy. All poetry, prose, painting, sculpture, all arts which record Nature with truth and in a form which has in itself a value as an original production of the human intellect, have, in recording her, added a new element to the beauty of Nature. Of course, it is all Nature, as Shakespeare says :

" Yet Nature is made better by no mean,
But Nature makes that mean ; so o'er that art
Which you say adds to Nature is an art
That Nature makes."

Take your Ruskin, for instance. By his gift of word-painting he has given you a treatment of Nature which is almost untraceably endless in its beneficent effects. Think of the number of eyes he has taught to love looking at the sky and the clouds, the flowers and the mosses, and all the beautiful things of outdoor life. With his art he has created in many a desire to feed themselves with all the best and purest food that outdoor nature gives us to enjoy. By his enthusiasm and power of

expressing it, he has lit the fire in many who would never else have known the purest of all delights—losing the sense of self and self-interest in admiration of the wonderful perfection of the work of the Great Artist.'

'Yes, yes; that I can understand. But that is still leaving Nature to teach you, after all. Ruskin's genius makes you care for the things which are made not by human hands or constructed out of human brains. But what is the painting, if there is such, which is analogous to Wagner's music? Something which you do not admire because it is an imitation of Nature, but which has a separate strong attraction.'

'Well, all painting which is the result of imaginative power affects those who are in tune with it in a corresponding way; and in a sense one given moment of the drama of passion and feeling can be expressed even more completely by a picture than by any dramatic performance, as the painter can create his own colour and line in which to render the feeling and inspire the whole with his own touch; but, of course, a picture is but one moment, and a picture is silent. Wagner has movement, music, action, all to help him in producing his effects. But again, that one moment in the

picture is there always, something of the painter's very own making, there for ever and aye, with the breath of his genius ever in it, the passion of his heart ever glowing through it.'

Lena looked up into Gustave's face, her own catching his enthusiasm. 'Ah,' she exclaimed, 'I think I begin to see the religion of painting. Those who have great artistic gifts have great responsibilities. They can make their work say so much—much, therefore, for good or evil.' And then suddenly she thought of the sky in her picture at home.

'Yes, exactly. And, of course, one ought to be able to suggest the fine side of the Puritan religion: its bracing hardihood, its restraint and self-denial, its courage and probity. Why not? The early Italians put their devotional feelings into their work, and made their very pigments translate the pure spiritual essence of their religion. I cannot believe the dramatic power of colour and form is in any way run out. But we moderns have so little faith in our own art. The deadening blight of cynicism and criticism is over it all!'

'But you have faith,' Lena said, with a calm strength in her voice. 'You can show what can be done in modern art.'

'That remains to be seen,' he said very quietly; 'it does not follow, alas! because we see and can talk about what ought to be done, that we can do it.'

They had very slowly been mounting the steep path leading from the valley up to the town, and now entered it through the Klingen Thor. From the other side of the archway they turned to look up at the beautiful old tower.

'How high, how very high it looks!' said Lena.

'Yes, and so strong and steadfast,' Gustave answered.

'It seems strange to think,' Lena went on, still looking up, 'that these beautiful things have been going on looking like this for hundreds of years, and that one day by chance you see them, and they become part of your own self. I shall never lose Rothenburg as a possession of my own. But it makes you long to travel more, to be introduced to more beautiful places, so that you might be endlessly rich in possessions of that kind. You do not know that kind of enjoyment exists till you have tasted it; but then you want more.'

'It is the same with people,' Gustave said,

as they turned and walked up the narrow, long street. ‘One goes on working and living, not knowing there is a gap anywhere wanting to be filled up. Then you meet some one who fits into the unrecognised gap, and you wonder how have you ever got on without this new friend ; life would feel so empty and starved if that friend went out of it again.’

‘Yes, exactly,’ said Lena eagerly. ‘Before Lady Lovat became the friend she is to me, I did not know I wanted any one like her, but now it would be dreadful to lose her.’ And Lena’s usually calm face looked brightly animated up into his.

How lovely was such animation passing over the pure, delicate form and lighting up the features with such a vibrating quality of beauty ! How exquisite the shell-like colour on the usually pale cheek ! He did not answer, but met her gaze with one which meant more than could be easily put into words. The remote worship of abstract perfection and finish was quickly turning into something warmer and more human. The romantic side of the German and the passionate side of the Italian were kindling fast in Gustave something which was very like love. As he looked down on her

a great longing came—a desire to follow in Lady Lovat's footsteps, to enter into and be wanted by Lena in her life. But, somehow, she inspired him with so intense a reverence, her personality seemed to place her so remotely away from ordinary women, that it was still disguised from him that he wanted more from her than to be a something recognised in her life, an entity, a friend. He felt too much awe even to imagine himself asking to be a lover. In fact, Gustave's heaven—for in a heaven he felt himself, as he walked with Lena all to himself as his companion—was a vague, indefinite heaven. The blind little god was playing his game in a way he likes to play it when he really means serious business. He fogs the distance and he hazes the foreground, and blears it all over with sunshine, depriving his victim of all possibility of knowing exactly where he is or where he is going; moreover, dramming him with his potion till he makes him delight in this indefinite position. When he has drunk so deeply of the dram that no atom remains free of Love's shackles, then he allows him to wake up and recognise he is a slave.

From the moment Gustave had seen Lena on the Apostle Platz at Cologne, watching so

intently the light that hung in the western sky behind the church, standing so still and so unconscious of his presence—from that moment he had felt a something in her personality which acted like a magnet on him. Each time that he found himself near her since that first moment the significance of this attraction for her increased; each time he had felt more distinctly he was nearing an influence in which his nature basked contentedly, as in a peaceful, lovely sunshine. It shed a refreshing calm upon his restless, sensitive nerves, and made him feel more truly alive, and in a state when he thought more what he wanted most to think, when he was more what he wanted most to be. This influence seemed to put him more securely on the platform from which he saw his widest horizon, from which he could take in his deepest breath. But even now he was unconscious that he was falling in love. Of one thing he was certain: he had watched her and thought enough about her to know that there was a calm and restfulness in Lena's atmosphere which gave it to him a great superiority over his own. There was sensibility without self-consciousness; there was a natural, though modest dignity and self-reliance, and therefore

no shyness. He was sufficiently a German to analyse all this and find pleasure in so doing. He had also sufficiently the nature of a true lover to like the sense of belittling himself and laudating his lady, of praising her to himself at the expense of that self; but he had not as yet awakened to the fact that it was a deeper self that was beginning to cling to hers, an inarticulate self in which the strength and weakness of both found a common ground in love. Who can ever tell the actual moment when the match is put to the fuel? We all know when the flame flies up, in a conscious desire to find words in which admiration and tenderness can find expression; but the embers are often really alight long before the flame awakens a consciousness of the fire. In the case of many women, and even some men, indeed, does not the fire remain in a smouldering, latent condition for ever? The consciousness is never awakened, because no appeal is made for it. The little god is off to something else before he has completed his work.

Gustave and Lena had walked on in silence half-way down the street, when Lena exclaimed, 'What a beautiful window!'

'Oh, yes,' Gustave said, starting; 'that is

one of the famous bits of Rothenburg they always photograph.'

The two paused opposite it, where, looking to their right, they saw the street ended by the tall, square Klingen Thor rising high up into the evening sky, and, looking the opposite way, the vista closed in by the massive and imposing pile of the Cathedral, tunnelled below by a mysterious and shadowed archway. A lamp hanging on a chain swung across the street was lit, but its light did little more than, by contrast, to cast into darker shade the surrounding space outside its rays. But the sky above still held a rosy after-glow, which made the twilight warm and glowing. The great buildings at each end of the long street rose up impressively against it in warm russet tints, shadowed by purple.

'Everything looks so much bigger than things do in England,' Lena said at last, not quite knowing what was exactly the cause of the singular impressiveness of the scene.

'I think that effect of size is caused in this instance by the buildings being of such unusual height, and the contrast between them and the low, small street. We see them all

through a narrow vista and from under and out of a deep shadow.'

He would have preferred going on talking to her and instructing her, and not to have moved on homewards for hours ; but, for a wonder, Gustave found he could not talk. He felt silenced by feelings which he could not translate into words—much more subtle and difficult to describe than the why and wherefore of architectural effects. So he moved silently after her, and reaching the Cathedral end of the street, they turned round to the left, past another impressive pile of buildings, across the Platz into the narrow street leading to the hotel.

Lena's eye caught sight of a white figure.

'There, I believe, is Lady Lovat,' she exclaimed, recalling the idea that she was wanting to find Constance.

As the two walked down the street in the dusk towards the hotel, Constance stood still in the middle of the street, confronting them with a half-quizzical smile lighting her eyes and dancing round the corners of her mouth. As they neared she began :

'And may I ask, Lena, where you have been all this long, long time ? Why you deserted me so basely, and why you come from

exactly the opposite direction from the one you would have taken had you wanted to find me ? I have been dying a hundred deaths, imagining you eaten up by wolves !'

Sir Bernard and Lord Brampton came out from the hotel doorway and joined the group, to listen to Lena's explanation.

Feeling, for some reason, like culprits, the two began, with a little hurry and confusion and not much lucidity, both talking and stopping together, explanations of what had happened.

'Oh, that's it, I see,' Constance said, when they paused : 'you lost your way, and you liked it.' She thought she had never seen Lena look so pretty. 'But now, please come in as quick as you can to supper. We are all as famished as the wolves that didn't eat Lena.'

'I wish we were not going away to-morrow. I really could learn to sketch properly here—everything is inspiring !' said Constance, as Lord Brampton handed the sketch back to her which she had made that afternoon, after criticising and correcting the perspective, in the room upstairs, where they were all sitting after supper. 'Now, let us hide away the candles, and enjoy Rothenburg *à la lune*.

Mr. Allbretcht, please preach us a sermon—the text Rothenburg—as you did at Cologne on the text Wagner. Are you not proud of having such a beautiful, unspoilt place in your country ?'

' We want the excuse of listening to a high-art sermon, to do nothing and say nothing—that's the English of it, Gus ; we are all fairly tired out,' said Lord Brampton, settling himself very comfortably back in an arm-chair.

The two windows were thrown wide open. They commanded a view of much of the town—the fortifications, towers, walls, and other buildings. Below, close under the windows of the hotel, itself one of the houses built on the walls of the fortifications, they heard the sound of rushing water as it tore away down the weir of a mill-dam. Beyond they saw the green valley, marked by the flowing river curving away to the distance, in loops of light round the headlands of wooded hill. All was bathed in streams of moonlight—half-lighting, half-mystifying every detail of the scene. A silvery sheen glistened, like lace worked in light, over the massive blocks projecting from the great walls—over the deeply grooved tiles on the roofs of the houses, and

in and out of the foliage growing among the buildings on the walls.

‘It is rather good, certainly,’ Gustave said. ‘This is what we Germans have excelled in. Our art instincts have always flourished most happily when they have been united with our mechanics and our crafts, our iron work, stained glass, etc. And so, in our architecture, our fortifications more than our churches show a national individuality. In fact, we Germans have never achieved the highest in any line of art, excepting in music.’

‘You are always ready to belittle your German nation, Gustave,’ Lord Brampton said.

‘I give them full credit for their music. But, as you say, I am a mongrel; half of me is Italian, and that is enough to show me where the Germans fail in painting. They have never understood the beauty of the human form—they have never had real passion for beauty, as the Italians had. They have had a passion for ingenuity, which is shown in their paintings of textures and ornaments and all the detail in their pictures; but they never used their powers of imitation in the service of poetry in painting, and therefore have never immortalised the most beautiful truths.

We Germans have never produced anything corresponding to the work of a Giorgione, a Tintoretto, a Titian—let alone the work of the religious painters. Even in our portraits, we never accentuate the special beauty of the human race—we prefer accentuating the peculiarities of individual character. Look at our great Holbein—for great he certainly is—he goes even further. He paints all his people with small eyes, placed near together. You do not think all his sitters could have had that peculiarity? He exaggerated a thing in itself ugly. This he could not have done had he had any passion for beauty. The Greeks, for example, accentuated every human characteristic which was beautiful, and their art, as art, is the best.'

‘But you said the other evening at Cologne, Mr. Allbretcht,’ Constance protested, that Albert Dürer and Giotto were the only artists of the past who could be compared with Wagner in their power of expressing dramatic feeling.’

‘Yes, I quite believe that to be the case; and had Albert Dürer had a feeling for the beauty of the human face and form, his art might have been even more precious than

that of any other painters, past or present, for his power was tremendous. What a hand, what an eye, what power of invention and design, what industry, and above all what an understanding of character and fervour and subtlety in rendering passionate, dramatic feeling! But when we come to look for beauty in the human form, independent of dramatic expression, there is absolutely none —no nobility, no grace, no charm whatever. And so, in this German architecture, you have all the qualities which ingenuity and industry give you, but none of the beauty for beauty's sake you find in Greek or Italian work.'

'I don't know,' Constance began demurringly; 'I feel there is poetry in the architecture of Rothenburg. It is not the element of ingenuity only which entrances one.'

'Ah! there is a human element of poetry in all old unspoilt buildings, which creeps into all the work which time has hallowed and Nature made beautiful by her embroideries of lichen and mosses, and stains of weather, and scorchings of sun. The history of the people whose passions and interests were so strong as to spend so much time and money in building perfect things, of their kind, for no purely

personal, selfish reasons—their history gets attached to and interwoven into the impressions their buildings make on the eye. Added to this, there is the sentiment of their having been preserved through so many generations intact—the feeling that we are here, from this window, looking on exactly the same lines of tower and turret, walls and roofing, that our ancestors looked on, five or six centuries ago. The feeling of the romantic in art comes in strongly in the case of very old buildings. It is a very subtle feeling, difficult to analyse ; but its value has more to do with the sentimentalism of association than with the power of intrinsic beauty, which contains in it the poetry of all times.'

‘Well, very likely it is as you say, Mr. Allbretcht,’ Constance replied. ‘The charm of this wonderful place may come a good deal from its age and associations ; but surely there must be some intrinsic beauty besides. Put Harley Street any number of centuries into the future, when all its great doctors are mediæval history, and almost prehistoric saints in their own line, and you won’t make that touch any sense of poetry to the eye.’

‘No, indeed,’ Gustave answered, laughing.

‘No ; Harley Street is stupid. One house made like another for reasons of uniformity, for uniformity’s sake ! Such uniformity has no place in the intelligent law either of God or man. It is an idiotic idea to think uniformity can be right—it is so deadening and wearying in its effect. Rothenburg is ingenious, and ingenuity is one of the best laws in the work of God and man ; only, I maintain, it is not the highest. The highest is, I maintain, that passion for the beauty which has nothing to do with our material lives, but which inspires our enthusiasm and touches the skirts of our spiritual emotions ; that produces the kind of art which is one of the truest elements of the best civilisations,—one which stamps any nation possessing such art as one of the truly distinguished nations in all history.’

‘I can quite understand that ; but,’ persisted Constance, ‘I do feel more than ingenuity in these things we are looking at : every line seems to be so original and yet so right.’

‘I think,’ Gustave answered, ‘if you ran it to ground, you would find ingenuity was the inspiring motive. We moderns have so utterly lost the habit of seeing really beautiful things

around us in buildings, that even the picturesque—and ingenuity is almost always rewarded by producing that agreeable quality—strikes us as beautiful.'

Constance shook her head.

' You both leave off unconverted,' Sir Bernard said. ' Mr. Allbretcht, you will find Lady Lovat a difficult person to instruct with a view to conversion.'

' When did ever people argue,' Lord Brampton exclaimed, ' with any other view than wishing to confirm themselves in their own opinions? Gustave has always been the soul of fastidiousness, but I should have thought Rothenburg was good enough even for him.'

' I have no right to have an opinion at all; of course, I know nothing,' Constance answered. ' I'm unreasonable, but it's because I have fallen in love with Rothenburg. It's part of the situation to be unreasonable. When you're in love, you are bound to maintain that the object of your love is perfection. It would be unnatural to do anything else.'

' Well, good-night, Lady Lovat,' and Lord Brampton got up. ' I must have a pipe to smooth out my weak intellect; you and that man have crinkled it up into shivers with

trying to understand all this analysis of art. It doesn't do to be so awfully clever, old man,' he went on, drawing Gustave's arm within his; ' it 's so exhausting to the weaker brethren, and your own work suffers. I never knew him draw so badly as he did to-day, Lady Lovat ; you have utterly demoralised him.'

CHAPTER IX

‘NICE people those, ain’t they, Gus?’ Lord Brampton said, puffing at his pipe, as they walked down the street towards the nearest gateway.

‘Yes, very. Really, Lady Lovat is most uncommon. She’s the *imprévue* incarnate.’

‘A bird-of-Paradise sort of person; so soaring and golden, and so irresistibly happy, living in a special Paradise of her own! There is something magical and fairyland-like about her.’

‘Yes,’ Gustave said eagerly: ‘so you think; and then she surprises you by coming out with common sense, almost philosophical depth—everything that makes a queer mixture with the bird of Paradise.’

‘Yes, exactly! exactly!’ said Lord Brampton, and then puffed away in silence for a moment; beginning again meditatively: ‘If you had to put her into words and describe her short, it would be precious difficult to give

any idea of her, Gus, to a person who hadn't seen her. "A pretty woman" would be quite inadequate; "A clever woman" wouldn't do; "A remarkable woman"—no, she isn't like that either. If she wasn't so funny, you might call her a poetical creature. The fact is, she's got every imaginable ingredient that's nice in her, without the faintest touch of posing at being anything whatever. She's a thoroughly genuine article, but complicated—*very*; everything that's nice rolled into one, and topping it all a divine personality. Everything comes right with her—the material things just as much as all the rest—and with no effort. It's her light touch which is so bewitching.'

'Yes,' Gustave said conclusively; 'yes, her personality is extraordinarily fascinating. Did you know her before she married?'

'Oh, no, my dear boy. I should have been desperately in love with her if I had; but dear old Lovat deserves her, if any man does. It takes a good time to know where his strength lies, but in his own way he's as good as she is. He is never wrong in judgment or feeling. It isn't in his nature to be anything but good. And he's not only passively good; he takes just as much trouble about everybody else's

welfare as most people do about their own, and all the while so quietly you don't suspect he 's moving a finger. And his judgment is very sound and firm. Do what you might, you couldn't move him if he has once made up his mind, for all his modesty and tolerance. Oh, I 'm thoroughly in love with them both ! And that other little lady—she is not a nonentity either, Gus, is she ? Dear me ! how she came out on that piano at Cologne !'

'She played extremely well,' Gustave replied, rather more seriously than was necessary.

'Her personality, too, is a very pleasant one; she is a contrast to Lady Lovat,' Lord Brampton went on, following his own thoughts; 'but both of them have charming personalities. And that 's, after all, the most important thing about people. As sociable humans, we justify our existence or we don't, so far as we come off pleasantly on to one another or unpleasantly. Everybody knows everything nowadays, everybody goes everywhere, everybody reads everything, everybody is up to date all the way round; the only difference lies in what the personality of the individual does with it all—how it turns it out on its fellow-creature. It 's really that more than anything else that

swims people to the surface nowadays. And it's very right it should be so, for it's the personality which tests the real grain of the creature—the what we are instead of what we do.'

'We have heard it said, "By their works ye shall know them,"' Gustave remarked quietly.

'Ah, but, my dear fellow, that didn't mean the works that go on nowadays and spoil people; cramming for competitive exams, and all the rest of it—pure self-interest and ambition! It's the effect one person produces on another that does the real work for good or for bad in the world; and if you run it to ground you will see why it is only lawful and right that it should. However clever people are, however well they can act, if they are selfish and insincere they won't have a pleasant effect on people in the long-run. Of course, there are idiots who are taken in by any showy vice; but we're talking of civilised creatures.'

'Yes, but, Brampton,' said Gustave, 'I think from the beginning you take too barbarian a view. It's the fault of your class. In your laudation of pleasant personalities, you don't take into account the necessity of struggle in

the world, and how struggle spoils many people. Just as reformers can't be sympathetic fellow-creatures to the individuals, or classes, it is borne in upon them to want to reform, so the personalities of the people who have as their daily vista of life the fact that if other people go to the top they must fall to the bottom—well, those people must get their personalities hardened, on the surface at least. You take the Lovats—people who have everything that any one could wish for ; goodness, brains, beauty, fair hereditary possessions, and responsibilities which keep them up to the mark, and money : of course, we know that people having all this except the goodness can turn it all to the bad ; but still, you must remember that it is comparatively easier for such people to preserve the delightful personality which comes off so pleasantly on all their surroundings, and that they are not in a fair running with the ordinary mortal. The creature who deserves the best the world can bestow is the distinguished soul who has to struggle through the fight, and who comes out of it not distorted or made ugly by it. But such a distinguished temperament won't have the bird-of-Paradise quality about it.

All firing in the furnace sobers the elasticity of temperament in people.'

'Well, really, Gus,' exclaimed Lord Brampton, 'you are *too* fastidious and hypercritical if Lady Lovat isn't good enough for you.'

Perhaps Gustave had been resenting almost unconsciously Lord Brampton's wholesale admiration for the buoyant happiness in Lady Lovat, and comparing it in his mind to the quiet, serious grace of Lena Prevost.

'She *is* good enough for me in her own way, and that is an intoxicatingly charming way. But as a flower is as perfect and more beautiful, perhaps, while it lasts, than a precious jewel, but fades and perishes at once if tried by adversity, and the precious stone will go through almost anything,—so those temperaments, the result of every favourable condition, would have to be tested by adversity before you feel you can put them in the first rank as influences for good.'

'I would bet you anything Constance Lovat would come out of the testing triumphant.'

'Oh, I daresay—only, at present she has only the charm of the flower.'

'And that's the best charm of all for a woman to have,' Lord Brampton declared.

'Isn't it Herbert Spencer who says that every atom of education or experience which lowers the vitality and high spirits in a woman is all to the bad ?'

'Well, I suppose that's because they have to go through so much, they want all the high spirits they can muster to go through it at all. We have the best of it, Brampton. The working is better than the weeping, any day. I think I'll turn in now.'

Gustave knew little of Lena's life or sorrows ; but no one who was sensitive and observant could be with her long without feeling that her serious silence was more the result of circumstance than of her natural temperament. He felt instinctively that she was beyond the flower stage ; she had in her the tried beauty, the latent but steadfast light of the precious jewel.

CHAPTER X

I looked and saw your heart
In the shadow of your eyes,
As a seeker sees the gold
In the shadow of the stream ;
And I said, " Ah me ! what art
Should win the immortal prize,
Whose want must make life cold
And Heaven a hollow dream ? "

I looked and saw your love
In the shadow of your heart,
As a diver sees the pearl
In the shadow of the sea ;
And I murmured, not above
My breath, but all apart,
" Ah ! you can love, true girl ;
And is your love for me ? "

D. G. ROSSETTI.

AT Bayreuth, even in these cynical, critical modern days, you feel that art really flourishes as a great and mighty force—a truly felt popular delight. We can imagine the kind of atmosphere which surrounded the kings and princes of painting and sculpture in Italy when the genius of Michael Angelo, Titian, Leonardo, and Raphael was a living power in the lives of all classes ; and we feel

an echo of such a power at Bayreuth. It is in the air—that strange electric current of enthusiasm, vibrating alike through the audience and the performers: all pulses thrilling responsive to the appeal made by the overpowering individuality and dramatic passion of the great poet-musician. The sense of such unanimity, the very fact that those hundreds of listeners, motionless and silent, feel they are all spell-bound by the same excitement, adds a deeper impressiveness. There seems an electricity in the air weighted by an accumulative force, the contagion of human sympathy and enthusiasm, adding an intenser charm to sound and action. Certainly, if to be fully alive is a virtue, to make a pilgrimage to Bayreuth becomes the bounden duty of all who feel through music and dramatic feeling a further meaning in life. In these great performances seems to culminate all that drama and music combined can convey to the senses in perfection, producing by such perfection a novel sensation to the listener.

The Lovats, Lena, and Gustave Allbretcht drove in to the theatre the day after their arrival at Bayreuth from an hotel five miles up in the hills, away from the noise and fuss

of the town, where rooms had been secured for them. It was Sunday, and the opera to be performed was *Parsifal*. They found themselves in a strange and noisy medley outside the theatre : Germans shouting, gesticulating, and growling ; English looking stiller and taking things more quietly, but anxious and momentous ; Americans, not losing even here, in the sacred precincts of Wagner, a jaunty, sight-seeing, meaning-to-have-a-good-time-of-it air, solemn art notwithstanding ; restaurants disgorging parties who have been dining on the spot ; acquaintances rushing up against one another ; greetings and exclamations of surprise ; strangers pushing past one another —in fact, all the noises and confusion of an excited crowd. A contrast, indeed, to that long line of carriages, in solemn and well-ordered procession, arriving at Covent Garden Opera-House on a subscription night. There is no rankiness at Bayreuth. If there are units of rank, their existence is submerged in the torrent of all sorts and conditions. Into the medley appears, five minutes before the commencement of the opera, a group of musicians from the orchestra, who sound on their horns a motive from the coming opera as a

signal for every one to find their own particular entrance door, and to pass through it before the second trumpeting sounds four minutes later, after which every ingress is shut, and no power will open any door, either for going in or coming out, for the next hour or more during which the act lasts. Once inside the theatre, and all is darkness and solemn silence. Not a fan dare rustle, not a word is spoken. The great audience, as it were spell-bound, sit motionless behind the great curtain and the cowl which rises below it half-covering the orchestra. The minute of silence and darkness seems a long one; then, out of the cavern where it is hid, begin those never-to-be-forgotten sounds from the orchestra: sounds not suggesting instruments played on and made by human hands, but recalling more the sounds of Nature's music—the murmuring of innumerable insects in the misty sunshine in a wood; the troubled sighing of the wind, the last remaining inmate of a ruined home, pent-up and wailing through crevices of wall and windowpanes; the lashing of waves against deep-caverned rocks; the stuttering failure as the wave falls helplessly to pieces; the triumphant roar and torrent of an overwhelming flood—crashing, splitting, forcing

everything before it, till, mingling with its true mate in the deep, rocking waters of the ocean, the rushing, gurgling stream broadens out into peace and restful triumph. Suggestions of sounds such as these come from the cavern, but with a human meaning added. These utterances of Nature's most passionate moods seem also to be unravelling a story of human fate and human passion, strange hieroglyphics in music uniting in their sound a story of Nature to a story of human life. The Christ-like pity in *Parsifal*, the human love in *Tristan and Isolda*, the waywardness in the dual nature when it has yielded to temptation in *Tannhäuser*—all these stories seem translated by records of the elements, and interwoven into utterances of Nature, blended together by a music strangely stirring and overwhelming.

Perhaps it is before the curtain parts, when the orchestra plays the story by itself, gathering up in a prelude the different motives which are to tell it, that we feel most spell-bound by the genius of Wagner—that we feel to the full all Bayreuth means, and what Bayreuth alone can give us. It is when we sit in the vast silent crowd and hear the many and varied instruments coming up as with one voice from

the yawning cavern below: a voice, one moment plaintively appealing, at another, urgent and restless; rising at last to triumphant rapture, then falling away—distinct but so faint, a murmur, a breath of sound, like a sigh of suppressed passion! The curtain parts, and the very action of the artists, however great those artists may be, brings us inevitably back to the condition of a theatre. We have wandered away into great Nature, our hearts strung and almost aching with the excitement of listening to music which can recall the drama of her intensest moods—and we are brought back to the boards. A more direct personal excitement may be produced by the acting and singing; but the deep, strange feeling of mystery—the power in sound, uttering and conveying the very meanings of Nature and the great tide of passions at her core—that lessens when the real acting begins. The incongruity inevitable, even at Bayreuth, between the vision to the mind's eye when Wagner's creations still are but imagined, and the actual vision of the stalwart frames of the great singers when they appear before us in reality, as heroes and heroines on the stage, produces a jar. Wonderful indeed is it, that

their power as artists and enthusiasm as disciples overcome this sense of incongruity in the degree they do as the scenes go on. Still there must always remain that difference between the direct appeal made by Wagner's genius attacking our own individual personality, when no other personality intervenes, and the effect produced when Wagner's genius is translated to us through another.

To Lena the story of *Parsifal* had a very directly personal interest. A tragic note had been struck so early in the awakening life of her girlhood, her sensibilities seemed naturally tuned to all that touched her sense of pity more than to those influences which touched her sense of joy or amusement. But in *Parsifal* that passion of pity which hitherto had been the strongest feeling in her own nature, seemed for the first time distinctly explained to her. The story seemed to explain herself to herself; moreover, it ennobled the sad, aching pain which had weighted and depressed her life during all her youth, by giving it the beauty of a virtue.

That first day, listening to *Parsifal*, she felt no presence near her. Sitting in the front row of the stalls with the Lovats and Gustave on

either side, there was actually nothing between her and the stage but the cowl which, rising in front of the stalls, hides the orchestra. The story took her back to her own most vivid life, and appealed to her with a pathos which brought the old aching pain with it. Whatever awoke in her an echo of that passionate grief and pity for the inevitable sadness of Gertrude's fate—now her mother's fate also—seemed to touch the mainspring of her whole being. Any hint of hardness or cruel bluntness in the treatment of the pain of mental illness aroused in her a heart-wringing indignation, which completely overpowered her for the time. She felt deeply sympathetic with the undeveloped simplicity of Parsifal—capable, nevertheless, of such throes of pity when he realises what he has done in shooting the swan, and also when he sees Amfortas writhing under the pain of his wound—and resented Kurneval's anger with him for the first, and his casting him roughly out of the hall because Parsifal cannot give articulation to his feelings on seeing the great ceremony of uncovering the Grail. So great was the sympathy she felt for Parsifal, that his triumph later on in the opera she felt almost as a per-

sonal triumph. The whole performance touched her as something which appealed to her most intimate life.

She had always recognised in a way that she had been unreasonable in feeling resentment towards those who had thought Gertrude's state hopeless, and had been most active in sending her away from home ; still, she had never overcome a sense of injury towards these. Lena had also never ceased blaming herself. She accused herself of stupidity. It was because of Gertrude's violence towards her that she had been sent to live among the sad and the sick like herself, instead of remaining among those to whom life was full of interest and thought. The fact was that it was by Lena's tenderness that the latent affection had been so far awakened and developed, and a condition created which led to an excitement in the poor brain, and a desire for means of expression which there was no power to explain or accomplish. It was a frustrated embryo of sympathy, which, turning on itself, resulted in violent outbursts of passion. Lena did not analyse or reason out all this ; but her fine instinct caught and recognised the fact that it was from an antagonism towards her

weakness, and a desire to emancipate herself from her sad condition, which had made Gertrude burst out with special violence towards herself when most sympathetic and tender. Others had had more control, because the subjection with them had been more complete to that lower level of existence to which her incomplete development had condemned her. Lena resented having to acknowledge this—resented it with all the more bitterness because she felt so helpless. Facts proved over and over again that the treatment of control was outwardly a more successful one, and Lena was thrown back on her own self-reproaches; retaining the idea with an indulgence of self-reproach (for it seemed to her mind to lighten some weight off Gertrude) that it was her fault in not having more completely given up her life to nursing and trying to meet the sick brain,—her fault in having allowed her nerves to be shattered, instead of controlling them and remaining calm and strong in her tenderness. But, even when her nerves had recovered physically, the overstrain caused by the scenes with Gertrude left a great, bitter aching in her heart, and it required but a very slight suggestion to waken this strain of remorse. It

was fully alive as the first and second acts of *Parsifal* proceeded; but the music and the excitement of the struggle between Parsifal and Kundry towards the end of the second act, and the triumph of pity as Parsifal bursts through all other influences as his memory recalls the pain and remorse of the King Amfortas, fairly took Lena out of herself and her own interests, and left her throbbing with excitement and with a sense of rapture in a larger life. *Parsifal*, like all great poems, has the effect of ennobling pain. The beauty of a great poem, in bringing the heroic element into the life of sense, not only cleans that life of all that is trivial and ugly, but accentuates the finer side of grief and gives it an articulation in a beauty, which beauty robs it of half its bitterness.

Lena hardly recognised herself when, after the music was all over and the crowd had been left behind, they were driving quickly out into the country. The road lay between an avenue of poplar trees, rising spire-like into the sapphire blue of the night sky, and lime-trees heavy with bunches of sweet-scented blossom. The full moon, pale-golden and glorious, lighted the silvery whiteness of the mists stretched

over the valleys below, and the hills richly covered with wood and cornfields into which they were mounting. A sense of fulness and delight quite new to her awoke a different Lena in her. Gustave, sitting opposite, looked at her face with surprise. Utterly away from her surroundings did she seem ; not dreamy or thoughtful, but entirely absorbed and pre-occupied with the novel sensation of feeling so fully contented. As a bird will throb quickly but quietly after a long flight, her breath came and went. He could, he fancied, almost hear her pulses beat as he watched the folds of her dress rise and fall. She appeared so entirely unconscious and far away, he could gaze on to his heart's content ; and what a delight he felt in so gazing ! Presently, however, Sir Bernard said, with pleasant contentment in his voice, and looking up into the night sky above him : ‘I think *this* is just the sort of thing we want after *that*.’

‘Oh, it was wonderful !’ Lena exclaimed, turning round to Constance with eyes aglow.

Constance gave a deep sigh. ‘It sets all the electricity in one going at a tremendous pace !’ she said. Had Constance not had her Bernard, had she not been blessed with happy-

ness as her lot, the strong current of electricity with which Nature had charged her might have made her life a difficult one for her to manage. But happiness had made Constance see everything very sanely and in no manner of means morbidly, however excitable her temperament, however great might be her power of enjoyment and sympathy.

Gustave leaned forward, looking eagerly into Lena's face, the sensitiveness of his very sensitive face softening tenderly as he met her eye. 'Was I right?' he asked. 'Is it not all I promised you it would be?'

'All!' Lena answered, her low, cooing voice thrilling with excitement: 'a great deal more! Wonderful!'

'Fetched at last! Lena excited! Delightful!' And Constance, as usual when she spoke, woke up every one else to a desire to speak also. And then they all began enthusiastically discussing the whole and each separate part of the performance. Gustave felt Lena as one with himself. The reality with which the story had come to her gave it the distinctness of having belonged to personal experience. She approached the story from the inside, not the outside—as we do when we discuss things

and people we have loved and known as part of our own lives.

As a true Wagnerian, this satisfied Gustave, and he felt Lena very much nearer to him. The awe of her was becoming less, but his worship was fully as great. She was ceasing to be a distant standard of perfection ; she was becoming, she had become, the most adorable of women ! Only too soon was the drive over and the hill-side hotel reached. As she stepped down from the carriage, Lena gave him her hand. He held it a moment quite still, and then only relinquished the little fingers one by one from his own.

As he turned and followed her up the steps of the hotel, it was borne in upon him at last, but with a conclusive certainty, that he had fallen desperately in love.

CHAPTER XI

What state of life can be so blest,
As love that warms the gentle breast ;
Two souls in one : the same desire,
To grant the bliss, and to require ?

DRYDEN.

THE moon flooded her little bedroom with light, recalling the mystic brightness in the Hall of the Holy Grail, and Lena lay sleeplessly revelling in the excitement the music still stirred in her. Gustave was not altogether out of it. She even recalled with pleasure certain looks and expressions as their mutual sympathy and enthusiasm had found words—he analytical and discursive, she conclusive and brief; but she did not get beyond thinking he was delightful because he appreciated *Parsifal* as she understood it.

The arid sorrow in the lives of brother and sister had dulled all inclination for pleasant romancing in Lena and George Prevost. And how much of most youthful love is tuned up to by tentative, dreamy imaginings! The playing with romance before the reality arrives ; the

flower-girl's light, dancing allurements before Kundry's influence on Parsifal develops his real power of feeling ! Nevertheless, the bright, ruby-winged god can appear very suddenly in life, though he has not hinted his approach in the tentative ante-chambers of romance. And perhaps the more sudden, the more unexpected his appearance, the more relentless his grasp, the more *bonâ fide* is the miracle, *the* great miracle of life—the miracle of those sun-rays striking us, that turn the world into such a delicious fairyland.

And the miracle came to Lena's consciousness suddenly in this wise.

She wandered out next day into the beautiful woods and glades of the Schloss, to which the hotel seemed to be built as a kind of *dépendance*. She had not seen Gustave. He, after a night of restless, feverish impatience, had got up early, and while breakfasting on the balcony was joined by Sir Bernard, whose bed had been too short for him, and whose equilibrium had been thereby somewhat upset. He had got out of this uncomfortable bed at an early hour, and after breakfasting with Gustave proposed a walk together. They started towards the village before Constance and Lena appeared.

'I think I will go into the wood and read up *Tristram and Isolda* for to-night,' Lena said, after the two had finished breakfasting together.

'Well, I have heaps of letters to write,' answered Constance; 'so I'm afraid, dear, you 'll have to go alone.'

And so Lena wandered out into the woods, book in hand, more inclined to wander and to day-dream than to read. A warm and misty summer sunshine played in and out among the shadows of the wood. Innumerable winding, crossing paths there were, edged by deep beds of velvety moss, wild strawberry plants, and puce-black bilberries; seats cut out of the great grey boulders, overhung by every kind of tree; streams spanned over by rustic bridges, here and there widening into lakelets, with miniature islands and chalets on the islands: everything, in fact, which nature and art make when they combine together in producing what are called 'beautiful grounds.' But the 'beautiful grounds' of a foreign château, not of an English country-seat. There was a remoteness and solitude, a largeness, which suggested the hunting of big game rather than the preserving of hares and pheasants. In

one sense they were more artificial; at the same time, nothing was highly finished and tidied up as in an English park. Once the pretty fancies and conceits established, Nature was more let to have her way. Nothing in the conditions of the place was wanting to the fostering of a romantic fancy. Lena felt it was indeed another world she was wandering in to that of her Somersetshire home, with its every-day-the-same monotony, flavoured strongly only by that note of tragic pain, ever present, ever unspoken, but ever depressing all sense of joyous vitality, all youthful feeling of spring and life.

Meantime Sir Bernard and Gustave had returned from their walk along the country roads to find Constance writing letters on the balcony.

‘Lena has gone into the woods to learn up her *Tristran and Isolda*. Good-morning, Mr. Allbretcht.’

‘I must not disturb you, you are writing,’ and Gustave turned, flew downstairs, out into the woods. But where to find Lena in the hundred paths up and down, going hither and thither? Plunging forward, he could only hope for a kind fate; and, as luck would have

it, right away on one of the seats cut in the grey rock, in the deep shadow from tall trees, was the slender, lithe figure of his heroine, draped in her grey cloak, which had already, days before, become to Gustave the ideal of a woman's garment. All night he had thought of her: thought of the moonlit face opposite to him as they drove quickly through the sweet-scented, fragrant, summer night air; saw again in his memory the eyes which had glowed so brightly with an inner excitement, the lips thinned and quivering by the quickened breath: a whole night of romantic imaginings had been lived through since he had last seen her. And now, when he came in sight of her, nothing could have seemed more right, according to the canons of romance, as an appropriate following to his restless waking dreams, than the conditions which surrounded her in the deep shadows of the lonely wood. But when, coming down the path rather from behind the seat where she was sitting, he startled her by suddenly appearing, he could not flatter himself for a moment that, in the gentle, natural smile with which she greeted him, there was anything to suggest preoccupation or sentiment connected with himself

having occupied her thoughts. He had tried to picture to himself over and over again how she would look, what she would say, when he told her that he loved her. It was with him as it is often with many : he had followed the story of impressions created by his own imaginings beyond the vortex which originated them, and he resented Lena appearing to him so very much like her ordinary self, compared to the Lena he had created for himself under the sentimental conditions he had fancied. It was very unreasonable of him, but he was disappointed. She seemed for the moment almost commonplace ! With reserve and with almost an air of pique he said, half-turning away, ' You were reading ; I must not disturb you.'

' You will not disturb me,' she said, quite with eagerness. She had no clue to the thoughts and feelings which had been simmering in his heart and brain ever since he had seen her the night before, and she wondered if she had unconsciously looked as if his appearing were a bore to her.

With a half-sigh he sat down on the seat by her. This was not what he wanted ; still, it was better than walking away.

' Have you read *Tristran and Isolda* ? ' he

asked ; 'I see you have it in your hand. It is the greatest tragedy Wagner ever wrote, but it is Pagan. The greatest tragedies must be Pagan because they are hopeless—Christianity brought hope into the darkest places ; but in the story of Tristram and Isolda there is no hope—a crushing, overwhelming fate, intense passion triumphed over only by death.'

'How different from *Parsifal* !' Lena said. 'It seems strange that the one Wagner should have done the two themes, so different in their essential feeling.'

'Genius is not constrained by limits of creed when it is as great and human as Wagner's,' Gustave answered. 'He did not tie himself to the faith of Christianity, though he entered so fully into its pure beauty and hopefulness.'

'I think that is rather dreadful,' Lena said thoughtfully—'that playing with the different influences of life like so many games. Either Christianity is everything, the culmination of all that is best in feeling, as Wagner treats it in *Parsifal*, or it is not more than a hundred and one other influences which have controlled human beings.'

There was a pause.

'But, then, human love has not its right

place given to it in Christianity,' Gustave said in a low, grave voice, leaning forward and resting his elbows on his knees, half-covering his face with his hands. 'Christianity does not preach that love—truly absorbing, passionate love—is the only right stepping-stone, because the most really unselfish feeling, to that higher love for God which we are supposed all to be aiming at. Christianity does not preach that, even though love is mixed with ingredients of selfishness, it is the strongest passion with which to conquer self-interest, love of money—all the horrid, sordid, depraving, worldly feelings of mankind.'

He stopped, and Lena was silent. She did not quite understand how he had got on to this eulogising of human love. After a minute she began rather suddenly :

'No, but Christianity is in itself that highest love in which there is no ingredient at all of selfishness—that passion of pity which absorbs all thought of self.'

Here Lena felt quite sure of her ground. Here she felt an inexhaustible depth of feeling to draw from. Not knowing quite how she began, she found herself telling Gustave something of her sorrow: not speaking

of the special nature of the trial, but of her sister's hard fate, and the cruel difference between their two lives. And Gustave forgot himself and his own cause in his sympathy with her, and in so doing gained more ground and brought himself nearer Lena than any love-making could have brought him. Quite unconsciously his sensitiveness caught the thread, and it very soon ceased to be Lena talking of her own life to him: it was both talking it over together; and when both seemed to realise at the same moment that it was time to be returning, they rose together. A sentence hung unfinished on Lena's lips; she could not be more explicit without going on to the sacred ground; but her eyes looked up into his, and she felt her gaze caught and riveted. He murmured, still looking at her as if he was looking into her—

‘I think I can follow and understand;’ and she felt as if in him she had indeed discovered a new self.

There was no shyness in her feeling, but only quiet, full joy, but in no wise recognised as love. She felt George had always taken for granted what her feelings were about their mutual trouble, because he felt the same him-

self. But here was a friend, not himself weighted with the sorrow, but showing such anxiety to share it in sympathy—to heal the wound, if possible. How wonderfully kind Lena felt him to be! Not a word had he said of his own life or interests. He had asked for no sympathy in return for all he had proffered. Had he been the most guileful of men he could not have acted in a more subtly wise manner to attain his end. He was, however, quite honestly self-forgetting. Naturally unselfish, he was really able to forget his own passionate need of love from Lena for the time-being, and lose himself in her needs and interests. The nature of her trouble added the additional barrier of pity to the diffidence already inspired by her refinement and natural dignity, though it increased greatly the tender devotion he felt for her. Through all their talk, latent lay the longing for the moment when he could pour it all out into her ear with the courage real love inspires. Still, he could be so far patient as to forget even that longing in Lena's thoughts and words as she uttered them; for it was the whole Lena he wanted to win, as she was in all entirety, with her past whatever it was—whatever was hers,

or had been hers, he longed to take part in, win, and possess.

Then on that afternoon came Wagner's greatest tragedy, *Tristram and Isolda*,—Gustave sitting by Lena in the darkness listening—with her presence near him so fully felt, and not a word spoken between them—to the great tragedy of Love sung and acted as only these great Wagner artists can sing and act at Bayreuth ! That day Lena, too, felt a second self near her, and that nearness gave the story a more thrilling interest, the music a more personal excitement, the passionate acting a more wonderful power—the whole performance a fuller satisfaction and delight. But when each act in turn was over, and they walked out into the glowing evening light, no word was said by either of them. Again, when it was all over, there was the full, shining, golden moon lighting the hills and vales, and they were driving out of the town up to the wooded hills.

‘Yes, I quite agree, Mr. Allbretcht, it is Pagan, quite Pagan ; but even according to Pagan standards it was a crime, her marrying King Mark.’ This burst out from Constance, the first words that had been spoken by any one.

‘Yes,’ said Gustave ; ‘having taken the

potion—in other words, fate having weighted them with the strongest feeling human nature is capable of feeling—their first duty was to their love. Tristran allowed his theory of loyalty to his king, and Isolda allowed the necessity of doing what she was expected to do, to override a far stronger, finer feeling than either: they were conventional and untrue to themselves, and that caused the tragedy—not their overpowering love.'

'Yes, exactly,' Constance exclaimed; 'the greatest sin towards poor old King Mark was, under the circumstances, marrying him at all.'

'Yes, yes,' Sir Bernard put in very decidedly; 'but, having married, there was but one thing to do.'

'Oh! but of course, dear,' Constance answered, 'if people do one wrong thing, they are nearly bound to do a dozen. But, oh! how she did sing, and act, and look! What do you say? Shall we walk up the short way through the woods? I feel rather boxed up.'

'Won't it make us rather late?' said Sir Bernard.

'Late for what, darling?' asked Constance.

'Oh! for nothing in particular, I suppose,' Sir Bernard answered with a pleasant smile.

Constance was leaning eagerly forward out of the carriage. 'There's the turning! Do stop him!' she exclaimed. 'You don't mind, Lena dear, do you?' and they all got out. Constance began at once a discussion with Sir Bernard, and, taking his arm, continued it with much vivacity, and walked quickly on, leaving Gustave and Lena to follow. Bars of shimmering moonlight lay across the path between deep black shadows from the fir trees; on either side in the wood was darkest night. They walked along side by side, very fully conscious each of the other's nearness, but without speaking. Then Lena, seized with the sense of the loneliness of the place, Constance and Sir Bernard having passed out of sight, roused herself to speak.

'It is a terrible story; you feel with them that it could not have been otherwise.'

'True tragedy,' Gustave muttered in a dry, rather unnatural voice; 'when no circumstances could have altered their love, death only ending the story of it. Such love, after all, is the consummation of all that is the fullest and richest in the possibilities of human feeling. As I was saying this morning, the shortcoming of Christianity is that it does not

preach the value of beauty, or of true human passion. Christianity shunts these realities into the shades of wickedness; and they are not wicked! We may learn to love God better than anything or any one after having loved a fellow-creature better even than our own souls; but most of us mortals, as long as we are mortals, cannot live our fullest lives alone in the spirit. Human love such as Tristran's and Isolda's is the completest feeling there is.'

His voice had risen as he went on speaking. He stopped suddenly, and turned facing her. Lena stopped also, and, looking up rather scared and startled into his face, met an intent, it seemed in the moonlight, almost a hard expression in his eyes as their gaze pierced her through and through. She felt in that look something far more than the kindness which had made him feel to her that morning like a second self. It meant a demand upon her for something which was as yet to her but vague and mysterious: she still looked into that gaze, troubled to find what it was asking her. She could not get away from it; but she felt her heart beating quickly, and then a trembling shyness overcame her, her eyes

fell, and she made a little confused effort to turn and walk on.

‘Wait a moment!’ he said, catching her two hands and holding them tightly pressed in his: he stopped, silent for a moment; then, in a low, quick, husky voice, ‘That love has come to me for you—the love that makes everything else in the world faint and tame beside it. May I speak to you of it? Is there any chance of your understanding me? Is there any chance of your giving me any such love in return?’

To Lena her whole world seemed that moment to be metamorphosed to something wonderful and strange. Alone and, save for the sheeny strips of moonlight barring the pathway, in the dark of night with this new friend, she felt as if for the first time her true self was revealed to her. A happiness which was an unreasoned joy flooded her whole being, and that joy was in him and in that love he offered her. She tried to look up into his face to learn some words in which to answer him, but failed, trembling and confused. He clasped her hands yet closer.

‘Lena,’ he said with passion, bending down close to her ear, ‘will you try and love me?’

A thrill went through her ; the slight figure stood straight and upright ; facing him and throwing back her head, she looked bravely full into his eyes. In that long and fixed gaze they read each other's truth, and they knew they belonged to one another. He dropped her hands and his arms clasped her closely. Some confused utterances, some fitful smiles, some gentle, tender caresses, then an articulate sentence from Gustave, spoken more as if it were in an exaltation of delight to himself than to her :

‘Till death us do part ! As my wife, till death us do part !’

Lena started and moved suddenly back from him. In an alarmed, excited voice she said, ‘Oh ! but you do not know all ! Oh ! what have I done ? You will see that can't be. Let us go on quickly to Constance. I cannot tell you anything now, but I will—and then you will see that cannot be.’

‘What do you mean ? You must tell me now, you must not frighten me !’ and Gustave tried to recapture her. ‘What do you mean ? Tell me quickly !’

‘I can't, I can't,’ Lena exclaimed almost wildly, and getting away from him.

‘But you must,’ he said almost angrily. ‘This is cruel! You love me, Lena; you know you love me, and why should you wish to torment me?’

‘I do not wish to torment you!’ she answered passionately. ‘Forgive me, but I cannot tell you now—not to-night.’ She tried to move on, but he kept her.

‘But you must tell me this, in words; answer me—you do love me, Lena?’

‘Yes, yes; I love you—at least—I suppose this is love—but it cannot be—what you said,’ she answered despairingly, and pressing him away from her. ‘I will tell you all to-morrow. We must go on to Constance now; to-morrow, in the wood where we were this morning, I will tell you all,’ and she escaped from him, and passed almost running to the hotel. Sir Bernard was waiting for them at the door.

‘Constance has gone straight up!’ he said, and Lena flew past him and ran straight to Constance’s room.

‘What is the matter, you poor, scared darling?’ she asked Lena, amazed; ‘have you seen a ghost?’

‘Yes!’ answered Lena faintly, and laughed

a little excited laugh. ‘Yes, a ghost of what might have been, but what cannot be. Such a beautiful ghost!’ and she threw her arms round Constance’s neck. Then, running on in a low, passionate tone: ‘He loves me and I love him, and I quite forgot all about our trouble at the moment. It came so suddenly, so unexpectedly! and it overwhelmed me with happiness! I wish, oh! how I wish George were here! ’

‘I will be your George,’ Constance said soothingly, stroking her head. ‘Well, Mr. Allbretcht loves you and you love Mr. Allbretcht! That is all very interesting. Why, I should like to know, do you say it is a ghost?’

‘Because I can never marry. George and I have agreed we can never marry.’

‘That ought to depend, I think,’ said Constance, seriously. ‘Your George is wise and kind, and I don’t think he would be selfish.’

‘Selfish!’ cried Lena almost indignantly—‘never selfish; he could not be selfish. But he thinks it would be wrong for us to marry, and I agree with him.’

‘Then probably the wise George has never yet fallen in love,’ replied Constance.

‘There is Sir Bernard coming!’ exclaimed

Lena, as a firm step made itself heard coming along the uncarpeted passage. And, kissing Constance hurriedly, she vanished, and a moment after Sir Bernard appeared.

‘Bernard, shut the door, quick !’ Constance exclaimed. ‘Fancy what has happened ! The dear, pretty god Love has closed his ruby, flame-coloured wings round my gentle ring-dove !’ And Constance threw her arms wide open up into the air, the white drapery of her full sleeves spreading like wings on either side of her. Ripples of stray golden locks had escaped from behind and trickled about her shoulders. Sir Bernard looked at her admiringly. She might have been impersonating a votary of the temple of the sun as he saw her standing there ! Beauty, fair and rich like sunlight, seemed to shine out from her ; but in another moment her hands fell down upon his arms, and she continued in a comfortably prosaic way : ‘In other words, Lena has fallen desperately in love with Gustave Allbretcht ; Gustave Allbretcht having, in all propriety, first fallen desperately in love with Lena ! *Tristran and Isolda* always does something of the kind, they say ; it is known to unearth elective affinities as nothing else in the world does.’

Sir Bernard, with an amused, kindly smile such as Constance loved to provoke, answered : ' And you knew all about it, and tumbled us out of the carriage to walk home through that dark wood all on purpose ! Ah, well ! all women, even the best of them, are schemers, I suppose.'

' I don't call that scheming ! ' said Constance. ' It 's only giving people proper opportunities. It 's after all, Bernard, only what Fräulein gave us ; and who more grateful than we were to her at the time ? Besides, I really don't think I quite did it with design, but I hate so the feeling of being in the way. I saw him looking unutterables at her, and felt somehow we two dear people were in the way ; something was imminent if only we were got rid of. It 's a natural instinct, dear Bernard, in every well-conditioned woman to do her best to give pleasure.'

' Well, I daresay it will all turn out very nice,' Sir Bernard said, drawing Constance towards him. ' But, darling, you had better take care ; try and get George Prevost into it as soon as you can.'

' Lena says George and she have agreed that it would be wrong for them to marry.'

'Because of the madness, I suppose ;' and they talked on until they became sleepy.

Lena, meanwhile, when she reached her little room, had found it flooded with moonlight. She did not light a candle, but threw herself on her bed. For the time there was no reasoning, no thinking for her. The excitement produced by the passionate music of *Tristran and Isolda* had culminated in a state of rapture which was as strange as it was overpowering. The awakening to the consciousness of her love, so suddenly and yet so fully, had indeed turned the world into a new and beautiful one for her. As she lay there with wide-open, wonder-stricken eyes, she felt life was brimming over with a newly found, rare joy. In vain did she try to think back on all the reasons which had convinced George, and through George herself, that the ordinary love and marriage were out of the question for either of them, and that they must always remain all in all to one another. The reasons slipped away out of her mind before they were fully remembered. They seemed faint and remote as this great flow of intoxicating, new happiness came rippling over every thought and sense, and drowning every consideration but

itself. It would be far too great a waste of time to try and go to sleep ; the mere sense of existence under such conditions was bliss.

To drown such rapture in sleep would be to neglect a chance of assured joy for at least those hours. So when eventually she did get into bed she lay with wide-open eyes living every moment of the day since Gustave startled her in the wood, over and over again ; till at last the moonlight turned to dawn, and the birds' early awakening chorus turned into a magic Bayreuth orchestra playing the motives in *Tristan and Isolda*, and in her dreams she was singing Isolda's wonderful song at the end of the tragedy—the rapturous exaltation of bliss in love, but ending in Lena's dreams with the words, ' till death us do part.'

She woke to find Constance standing over her, beaming down on her a bright, amused smile. ' It's ten o'clock ! ' she said, as Lena, dazed, looked up into her face, not yet knowing quite where she was, or to what she had awaked.

' Oh dear ! I shall be late,' she said, starting and sitting up. ' I have to go and tell him all in the wood.'

' Well, you had better have your coffee first,

Love and Wagner may give you nearly all the food you want, but not quite. And, Lena, you know, I am not sure you ought not to be chaperoned ; I am responsible for you.'

'Oh, it is all far too serious to think about chaperones,' she said. 'Besides, I am really much older than you are, dear Constance.'

'What a story, Lena !'

'Yes, I am ; some things teach you to be very old before you're young. Not that I don't want your help very much !' and Lena threw her arms round Constance's neck. 'Dearest Constance, I owe to you everything. Without you I should have never known what the word happy meant. You have given me the bright hours of life ; whatever may happen now, I feel I have lived, and it is all owing to your friendship.'

Constance kissed her warmly, but said in her bantering way, 'All very well, dear, from your point of view, but what about "*George*" ? He still might see the necessity of a chaperone.'

Lena laughed ; she quite thought she intended to say everything to Gustave to prove that they must not love one another, but somehow this intention had not yet demolished the happiness of the love they were not to feel.

As she flitted through the wood she hardly felt the ground under her. Something seemed floating her along, through the warm and misty summer sunshine, under the shadow of high trees, past the glistening silver-birch stems, and the hearse-like plumes of black-green firs, heavily swung from the stem, and shadowing to deepest darkness the hollows beneath them; away to the grey boulder seat in the lonely, mossy dell, so remote and solitary. Of course Gustave was there. He had been there impossibly early. He had sat down, then walked up and down, sat again and walked again till he had pretended to himself that he had given her up. But just as he was getting really genuinely alarmed, there she was, gently, but quickly, flitting down the little pathway, in a white dress, with the grey cloak lightly waving around it.

He eagerly sprang up the walk to meet her. He would have clasped her in his arms, but as he put his two hands forward, she seized them and held them.

‘I am late,’ she said, with hurried breath and a shy little laugh. ‘I overslept myself; I was dreaming of *Tristran and Isolda*, only it ended quite differently.’

The happiness for both of being again together ! But it was almost too soon. Lena felt she might have done with three days' dreaming over the wonders of the previous day, before needing a second supply of material for joy ! But, is it not always so in this world ? The good things come all heaped together, and the bad ones never come alone ? Gustave allowed himself to be led and placed on the seat beside her. Then he wrested one hand from hers and threw it round her, drawing her close to him : 'Say again, before you say anything else, darling—say again you love me.'

'Yes, yes, I love you,' she answered hurriedly, hiding her face against his shoulder. What she had to say must demolish all this bliss, and the half-acknowledged consciousness that this would be so made her bold. That moment must belong to her joy, whatever the future might be. For that moment she must be true to the beautiful ruby-winged god who had folded his wings around her. All her life she had been so starved ! Positive, satisfying happiness had never been hers till now. Gustave raised her face to his ; a long, long kiss, then pale and trembling she started to her feet.

'Yes, I do love you,' she said passionately, her voice faint and quivering, her whole being throbbing like a bird exhausted by wild fear; 'but I must tell you everything. I told you something yesterday, but not all; you must let me sit quietly by you, or I,—I cannot do what is right: for,—for I do love you.' Just as, years before, that passion of pity and tenderness for Gertrude had rushed out so suddenly, so overpoweringly, from the gentle, calm Lena, surprising herself as much as those around her, so this passion of love had come upon her now; this time with a flood of great happiness, instead of the misery which had poured over her years before, leaving as its legacy such a saddened life for Lena. Gustave, though dazed and almost stunned by such joy at the moment, felt deeply grateful to her. He had a nature instinct with generous chivalry and delicate sympathy, and with a quieting, soothing voice he said:

'Yes, I want so much to hear all, all that ever happened to you and yours. We will sit quietly here, and you shall tell me.' She sat down on the seat on the other end to where he was sitting, and he did not move towards her.

‘First, tell me, where do you live, and what your “*George*” works at; or is he a *rentier* with nothing to do?’

‘Oh no, we are small people, not at all like the Lovats, only she is my friend.’

‘Oh, we are small people,’ Gustave repeated pleasantly and comfortably.

‘Yes, and George is the chief owner and partner in a merchant’s business which our father left; but it is not a large business, and we are not rich. But that is not of any importance. The things I have to tell you are very serious.’ Then Lena, in her usual quiet, straightforward manner, told him the story of the family trouble, of Gertrude’s illness, of her mother’s, and all that she and George had lived through in consequence. The moment she touched on their trouble the feeling came back that she herself belonged to it, and it alone; that she must bear her burden, or she was dividing herself from those who needed her love and pity most. When she had quite finished, and the time came for Gustave to speak, he said very quietly:

‘Yes, I quite see his point and yours, and I am sure he is only what your brother ought to be. I hope I am not conceited, but I think I

might add something to both your lives if you would think of me as quite belonging to you, as one of your very own, and let me share your trouble.'

Lena looked at him with serious, admiring eyes—then she gave a low, deep sigh. He did not know—who but those who had lived in it could know?—what such trouble as theirs meant.

'You owe your life to your art,' she said. 'I have heard you say that an artist should keep his life as simple as possible. Only that day in the train, as we went along the Rhine, you were saying to Constance that an artist should be able to put his choicest self, his strongest sentiment into his work, and steer clear of all complications in life.'

'You remember what I said even then!' Gustave said, looking with delight into her grave eyes. 'That was before I fell in love, or rather before I knew I had fallen in love. I daresay I talked a great deal of nonsense before I awoke to the real meaning of everything. But, in one sense, I was right even then. But love and happiness are not complications in life, they are additions which enrich the soil out of which an artist's work grows. A wife

whom he adored would complete an artist's life, not complicate it, and free it from the morbid conditions solitude and artistic work will produce in a sensitive nature.'

'Yes, if there was no illness.'

'But every one must face the chance of that.'

'Yes, but no one has a right to add to those chances consciously. If I had an illness such as Gertrude's or mother's, you would suffer as I have suffered. Oh! I could not bear the thought of that possibility. There would be that awful skeleton always in my cupboard!'

'But, my darling,' protested Gustave, 'you must realise that if you refused to marry me you would be giving me infinitely greater pain at the time, and more life-long regrets for ever after, than any other misfortune that might happen could give me. Besides, whatever happened to you would also be my misfortune through my love for you. Mine is not a love fed by admiration only, I am no boy; at thirty-five one can gauge the worth of one's feelings. Your nature is the complement of mine. In you I should find the peace which passeth understanding, and should feel

the delight of every latent noble feeling satisfied, a very heaven on earth, a stepping-stone to whatever heaven in a future state is possible to my very best self. Surely such love as ours entails a responsibility? It was not our doing. How can there be a question? To raise one seems almost incompatible with the existence of love.'

'Don't, don't,' cried Lena, the tears starting to her eyes. 'You must not doubt me. I do not understand it, but I know this feeling is the strongest, most beautiful thing that ever came into my life; since last night I feel as if nothing else belonged to me but that. But just as there is a past life behind us which has been real, though for the moment it seems all wiped out, so there must be a future in front of us which will be real, and it is my very love that would claim for you every exemption from unhappiness as far as I can influence your life.' With an anxious, tear-stained face she looked full into his eyes. 'I must write to George, I must do what he thinks right.'

Gustave felt alarmed at the idea that his fate was to be put into the hands of any one as remote as this '*George*,' and he said testily,

‘Meantime you must remember you have given me your love, and I could not live without it now.’

Lena looked away into the deep shadow of the wood: ‘I ought to have asked George first,’ she said, troubled. ‘I have done wrong, but’—and she turned on him a look of tender earnestness, her whole countenance quickened with sensitive, eager emotion—‘but I could not help it !’

He caught her in his arms. What a joy to feel she could not help it!—that this power of loving was in her and had come his way; that the strong white flame of perfect purity, the love which had given itself so generously, unstintingly, when asked for, was his! She did not struggle away from him. When George knew all, he would not be able to help it either! The demolishing of all bliss which she had come out into the lonely wood to effect!—where was it? The bliss was as great—no, far, far greater. She had talked of the tragedy of her life to him, and in so talking half the bitterness of that tragedy had vanished away. Everything that had ever been hers seemed to mingle with the blessedness of this dear, dear love.

'I must go,' she said, lifting her face to his, but not moving away from him.

'No, I cannot let you go.'

'I must,' she whispered, trying to get away, as she felt his spell holding her the closer. 'It was late when I came, and you are all going to Nuremberg. I must stay at home and write to George.'

He clasped her closer to him. 'I will not let you go till you promise me to be here the day after to-morrow. Here, in this place.'

'I shall have nothing more to tell you. George's answer will not be here.' Still her cheek nestled the closer against him.

'Promise.'

For a moment she did not answer; then with a low rush of impetuous words: 'This is not right; it may all end in making you more unhappy afterwards. I ought not to be here alone with you till I have heard from George that it is all right. I could not help it, but I ought not to come again. But, there, I promise. I must go.'

'My Elizabeth,' he said, passionately kissing her, and she flew away from him.

CHAPTER XII

THE day before, during one of the pauses between the acts of *Tristram and Isolda*, Sir Bernard had come across two House of Commons friends and another London acquaintance, a Q.C., and he had asked them to drive over to luncheon and join the party to Nuremberg.

The House of Commons, wherever you meet it, is always the House of Commons. Whether on the Acropolis at Athens, or in the Tribune at Florence, or in the sacred Wagner precincts at Bayreuth, that particular House of Commons ring soon dominates over all, to it, minor considerations. It may look, or it may listen ; but in spirit it soon gets back to Westminster, cracking its own special Parliamentary jokes, and talking over the last thing about Gladstone, —for a last thing there always is, whether it be a friend or a foe discussing him. Lena, had she been conversant with that London

world and its ways, would have recognised its sound in the voices she heard speaking on the balcony as she neared the hotel. As it was, she only recognised them as cheerful, civilised sounds, very remote from her own train of thought and feeling ; and she wished much she could have avoided contact with the party.

Constance met her on the staircase and said, ' Luncheon will be ready directly. Bernard's men have come, and we must not be late, or we shall lose that train.'

' I will stay at home,' whispered Lena, ' to write to George. But he must go, mind, Constance ; you *must* make him go.'

' He won't like it,' Constance said, raising her eyebrows ; ' but, of course, he *must*. You two can't be left here together without any chaperone, however old and wise you are, Lena. There are limits, however solemn and severe the exaltation. No ; it would be what people call "going rather too far." We sha'n't be back till to-morrow in time for *Tannhäuser*. You will have to drive in alone and meet us there.'

Gustave had joined the rest when Lena came down to luncheon. She listened to him

talking with the M.P.'s and the Q.C. and Sir Bernard, surprised that he should know so much of their subjects. But not only had Gustave been accustomed to hear public questions discussed authoritatively by his father and his circle since he was a boy, but when staying with Lord Brampton at his home he had become familiarised with English politics, especially when touching the philanthropic side. The fact that Lena was there to listen was quite sufficient reason for him to rouse himself to talk. He had quick ability in seizing the interest of general subjects; and as she listened to him she wondered how he could have ever become interested in any one as silent and little conversant in the ways of the world as she was, and a certain pride in him mingled with the joy of her love.

When luncheon was over, Gustave found himself given no choice. He had to go to Nuremberg; he felt very vicious at the necessity, but go he found he must. He was sitting opposite Constance on the road to Bayreuth before he had found time even to raise an objection.

Lena was left alone to write her letter to George. She shut herself up in her own little

room. Through the wide-open window she saw in the bright afternoon sunshine the pretty Bavarian village on the rise of an opposite hill, a wooded valley lying between. She looked out, resting her elbows on the table, on which the paper, pen, and ink were all ready for the writing of the letter. She leaned her face on her hands and waited for an inspiration to begin. What was there about it which made this inspiration so long in coming? She was full of her subject, and longing for George to know all about it. She wrote to him constantly, and had never found any difficulty in writing to him before; but now, as she waited and waited to begin, she felt that a week's experience had floated her away from the Lena he knew—had given her a new world to live in of which he knew nothing—and that she could not explain it to him, because she doubted whether he would understand what she meant, so little had the emotional side of life ever seemed to have affected him. She now knew it was her most real life, this life of love she had thus awakened to; and the stronger she felt the power of it, the greater seemed the distance she had to span between her own attitude of mind and

George's. It was not that she was sure of her own judgment, but she longed for George to have the same data as she had, before giving judgment on her case; and she feared that that was a fruitless longing. From the day when she first met Gustave at Cologne she felt now that he understood better what she was thinking and feeling than dear George would had they both lived to be a hundred; and yet she had to keep this intimate sympathy at bay till the less understanding nature accepted it for her. But, then, was it not George who had fought with her their great trouble? and, though undemonstrative and reserved, had he ever failed for one moment to give her that protecting care and that thoughtfulness which made her feel one with him in all the action of life? And then she hated herself. Was it not that she was trying to shirk their sorrow and turn to this new joyous existence, forgetful of the responsibilities of the past? What happiness could be lasting, however well it fitted into her real, strongest individuality, if it did not also give room for all the old affections, associations, and sorrows to abide faithfully and steadfastly in her heart?

Impatiently rubbing her eyes, as if to obliterate from their sight the new world which had taken so strong a possession of her, she seized the pen and forced herself to begin.

'MY DEAR GEORGE,—I must write to you at once and tell you what has happened. But it is very difficult to do so, because I feel it is very strange to myself, and will seem even stranger to you. I wrote and told you some friends of the Lovats—Lord Brampton and a German artist, Mr. Gustave Allbretcht—had joined us, and that Mr. Gustave Allbretcht came on with us to Bayreuth. I have had some talks with him alone, and yesterday evening he told me he loved me. I can only tell you facts, because, as I said, it is all so strange I cannot explain it. But I do love him, and I feel so happy, dear George, it seems as if it could not be wrong. But I told him at once we—you and I—had agreed we must always remain all in all to each other and never marry. And I told him of our trouble. He was very kind. I wish you were here to talk to him, and to hear him say how much he would like to be allowed to be one of us, and to help us to bear it. I told him I could decide nothing before writing to you and re-

ceiving your answer. Please send it by return, if possible, to the Hotel —, Wurtzburg, where we go on Friday. Tell me in it what I ought to do. I feel my judgment cannot be trusted, because it all seems so new and strange, and no one but you knows our past. I told Lady Lovat what had happened at once. She likes him very much. They have all gone to Nuremberg for one night, as there is no performance to-day; but I stayed at home to write this to you. Had it not come so suddenly, had I had time to think, I should have written to you before I told him I returned his love. I wish I could write more, and explain everything exactly as I feel it, but it is impossible.—Always your affectionate sister,

LENA.'

She gave the letter to be posted, and wandered away again into the woods: to dream, to be happy, to be fearful—to be all, in fact, that Love makes us when he is working his miracle in right good earnest, not letting any rival even so much as peer round the corner!

The next afternoon, as the lovers sat together listening to *Tannhäuser*, the music seemed to be played and sung to them

merely in order that the happiness of sitting and hearing it together should be greater. The whole performance was immeasurably less in exciting effect than the sense to each of the other's presence. Nevertheless, the music in its wonderful power not only increased their happiness, but made it more remote from the ordinary life which might have interfered with it. How Lena loved Elizabeth because *he* had called her his 'Elizabeth'! In the last act Gustave could not help a feeling of uneasiness creeping over him—Why *had* he called her his Elizabeth? Though so refined and pure, she was no heavenly love. He had no divided heart. She was everything he could imagine that was best in heaven and earth.

Her promise was not kept, and those words, 'My Elizabeth!' were the last words spoken from the lonely hidden seat in the deep shadow of the wood by either of them; for, before the trysting hour came, the heated brightness of a sultry morning was covered in by cloud. The thunder rolled among the hills remotely, then nearer; and soon the hotel and its inhabitants were darkened in a two hours' thunderstorm. Gustave felt depressed,—he was disappointed, the storm affected his nerves, and an ominous

alarm seized him, though he would not allow to himself that it could be grounded on anything real. The storm affected Constance, too, so uncomfortably that she stayed in her room, and Lena remained with her. Gustave thought he should take this opportunity of speaking to Sir Bernard as to what had passed between him and Lena ; but Sir Bernard was engrossed in writing his letters. It annoyed Gustave to see with what a settled air he wrote letter after letter, as if there would never be an end to it ! More annoying still was the thought that Lena and Constance were talking upstairs together, and there was no way in which he could get at them. At last, however, just before luncheon, they both appeared.

‘ This is so unnecessary ! ’ were Constance’s first words, and she looked out at the sheets of rain that were falling. ‘ It’s blackened everything, and made quite another place, and such a dreary place, of the hotel. Yes—exactly—I’m so glad,’ she continued, shaking hands with Gustave and looking at his depressed, dejected aspect—‘ it’s made you as cross as it’s made me.’

‘ Isn’t your headache any better, dear ? ’ Sir Bernard asked, looking up from his writing.

‘My head is all right, thanks, darling ; but the storm has scratched up all the electricity and made it go the wrong way.’

‘Yes, do let us talk about it,’ Gustave said, reviving. He had pressed Lena’s hand in his—she was there—they were together. ‘Things always get better if one thrashes them out and anathematises them *well*.’

‘It’s that horrid, unexplainable *malaise* in the air when thunder is about which makes you so cross and gives you no reason for it,’ said Constance. ‘I am glad it is *Parsifal* again for our last performance. It won’t matter what weather it is when we are once there.’

The beautiful poem of *Parsifal* gave Lena only happiness to-day ; all painful association was overpowered by her present joy. The old story — to those that have, shall be given. Happiness comes to the happy ; misery to the miserable. It is so much from within that we create the atmosphere outside us, tuning the circumstances of life to the inner chord of feeling. Habitual depression, arising from a chronic pain, will colour the world very grey, and will strain the nerves till everything takes a morbid shape, often without cause and effect being necessarily traceable ; and likewise a

feeling of positive joy will illumine every circumstance of life with its sunshine, and lighten even its sorrows with rays of its radiance.

But Constance was becoming anxious. This falling in love had come in such an inevitable way, there had been little time for realising the whole position. But during the thunderstorm Lena tried to ease her conscience by remembering out loud to Constance all that George had said to her against either of them marrying. Lena, full of the glamour of her love, could say it all and yet feel that, in the true nature and justice of things, Gustave and she must remain one for ever. But Constance was not blinded by any glamour. She saw difficulties, heart-breaking difficulties, ahead as possible in the future.

'Oh, Bernard, I want to talk to you,' said Constance, as Sir Bernard came into her room that evening—the last of their stay at Bayreuth. 'I'm afraid these two dear young people are going to get hurt. They have taken the malady so seriously. They are both so desperately in love.'

'Well, that doesn't generally hurt people much, does it?' said Sir Bernard, putting down his candle, and turning with a smile to Con-

stance, who was sitting on the edge of her bed.

‘That depends,’ she answered, putting up her two hands and spreading out her fingers round his arms. ‘Lena, I told you, said she and “George” have always settled never to marry. They think it would be wrong to, because of all the madness in the family. You see, it’s rather awkward being so desperately in love if there is a reason why they shouldn’t marry. It brings about an interesting but a tragic situation, and it seems to me we are responsible for it.’

‘Yes, darling, and it all comes from your tumbling us out into that dark wood the other night,’ said Sir Bernard, putting his two hands on her shoulders.

‘Does it? Well, perhaps it was rather a strong measure—just after *Tristran and Isolda* too!’ and Constance looked straight before her with round eyes and a perplexed air. ‘But, then, I felt we were in the way; and the one thing I will *not* be, Bernard, if I can help it, is ever in the way.’

‘You have not often to trouble yourself on that score, I think,’ Sir Bernard said, smiling down on her.

'No, but seriously, Bernard, I wonder if there is anything we can do. I hate so people getting hurt. I might have known—I did know—they would both take it badly if they took it at all. And, after all,' Constance went on, rousing herself, "'it's better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all.'" Though, to be sure, that's only a salve for the principals; it doesn't exonerate the chaperones. But, anyhow, such serious fallings-in-love, like marriages, must be made in heaven—they are among the inevitables; and, whatever happens, I am always for full and candid explanations, and for people knowing where they are with one another. Nothing is more thoroughly unsatisfactory than for any two people, when they have been in love with one another, and when it's all over, everlastingly going back and wondering what was meant by this or that, and whether the other cared, or whether he or she didn't.'

'I think, Constance, you are a little uneasy about your part of it, all the same,' said Sir Bernard, amused. 'Our two lovers have had it well out, have they?'

'Well out! I should think so!' exclaimed Constance, making her eyes very big. 'That

quiet little puss, Lena—my ringdove—no Isolda could be more enamoured with falling in love than she is; and so is Gustave Allbretcht—he is *divinely* in love! You know, Bernard, I can't help enjoying it! There's nothing in the world so pretty as love and love-making; and when the lovers are as nice as ours are, it is most interesting to watch it going on. And, after all, this “George” may change his mind; and if he does, Lena will change hers in a twinkle, I am sure.’

‘I don't know,’ said Sir Bernard, thoughtfully. ‘It seems to me rather too sudden and too quick a thing to change the habitual thoughts and feelings of years. Remember, Constance, your poor little ringdove can't always live at Bayreuth, listening to Wagner. Strange and novel conditions may give her strange and novel opinions; but when she gets back to her ordinary life the old associations would have their weight again.’

‘Ah, yes; but, Bernard, you don't know—no man can know—the wonderful change falling in love makes in a girl's life. She can never be the same again—never—never,’ Constance said convincingly. ‘I know I felt a perfect brute when I fell in love with you.

Nothing seemed of any real value but you, and you know I do care awfully for papa and Fräulein. But if I had not married you, do you think I could have ever been really happy with either of them? Never—never.'

'But if you had married me, Constance, without their consent and approval, you wouldn't have been happy either.'

'Yes, I should,' she said, shaking her head, and looking with searching eyes into his. 'To begin with, I should have made them give their consent. But I'm afraid that Lena has had such a depressing life, she hasn't enough high spirits left to govern her mankind. I wonder, Bernard, if we can do anything to help poor Gustave Allbretcht?'

'Shall I speak to him?' said Sir Bernard.

'Good Heavens! no!' exclaimed Constance, putting up both her hands. 'You would only both make each other uncommonly uncomfortable. He would be so shy, and you would be so magnificent (all the time really as shy as he was), you would utterly misunderstand each other. Perhaps we had better wait till Lena hears from "*George*." I have told Mr. Allbretcht he must come to Wurtzburg with us, and then I might see whether it would be

a good thing for me to write some ecstasies to him on the *motive* of his sister's lover.'

'And, meantime, may I go to bed?' asked Sir Bernard; 'I'm very sleepy.'

'Yes, darling, you may. But mind, remember you must be very kind indeed to the stricken ones. The situation is not at all comfortable for them!'

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